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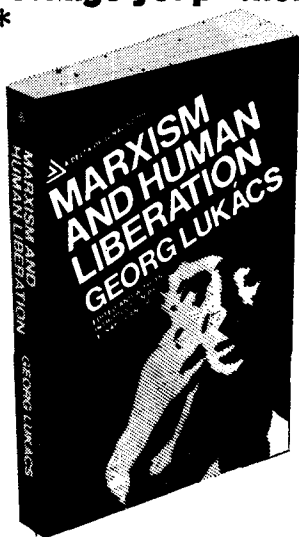
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NOTES

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POINTS AFTER.

POST MORTEM

It's a frightening idea, but events seem to move faster than we can think. They become memories before they are facts.

I had almost forgotten that only a few years ago I was flattered and deeply disturbed when some of my more stylishly revolutionary students told me in a patronizing tone of tolerance and respect that I was the only one over thirty whom they trusted. (Naturally I wondered how many other people they told this to.) To many of the embattled young all of us who were not only over thirty but remembered the time when history was supposed to make some sense were the enemy — not the reactionaries, not those with real power, but *us*, those of us whose only sin was to think that while the New Left might have some admirable ideals it was politically crazy.

Now this phase is over, almost before it got started. If there is any continuity in the radical movement in this country, it is in the idea that there is no continuity, in the fact that every new development is a fresh start, having little to do with the past, as though it dropped by parachute from the future.

I suspect it is still too early for any startling conclusions. But one thing is clear: though certain diehards and sentimentalists refuse to let go, the New Left is dead. And perhaps the most useful thing we can do at the moment is to ask why it was prematurely born and why it died prematurely.

The New Left was born because the old left was dead. The old left was either Stalinist or anti-Stalinist; and while the Stalinists obviously were never more than a foreign growth in America, the anti-Stalinists, some of whom turned right and others left, were in their own way also too doctrinaire and factional. The New Left, on the other hand, because it flaunted a break with the past, filled some people with the hope that here at last was a radical movement that was fresh, free, flexible, open to new ideas, and truly native. Unfortunately, its nativity connected it to certain antiintellectual and crackpot currents strongly rooted in homegrown traditions. Ironically, too, the seemingly free-wheeling quality of the New Left, instead of freeing it from the constrictions of the past, simply substituted a sectarian style for a sectarian program.

Symbolic action, individual gestures, communal experiments, political improvisations, and élite demonstrations — all of these created a certain sympathy for youthful political energies and sacrifices, but except on the issue of the war they failed to get beyond the fringes of American political life.

What's next? Movements are as unpredictable as they are short-lived. And one has to resist substituting the Marxist catechism — of uniting workers, intellectuals, and parts of the middle class — for political realities today. But, in fact, there seems little hope unless some way can be found of bringing sections of the population thought to be beyond redemption by the New Left into some sort of coalition — if only to lead the country out of the present morass.

In the meantime, we could do without the gloating of the conservative liberals over the corpse of the New Left, for genuine failures are often more instructive than illusory successes.

THE NEW ROMANTICISM

In the last few years there's been a feeling of change, a feeling that one era is over and that we are entering another. The shifts are not clear-cut, and are often concealed by the fact that things go on as before, but the signs are all around, in politics, in the arts, and generally in the way we see our own roles.

However useful academically, sweeping characterizations of cultural periods — like neoclassicism, sentimentalism, pre-Raphaelites — have all become suspect. As Lovejoy pointed out, the idea of romanticism is the sum of so many contradictions that it amounts to little more than a tautology: the age of romanticism is the age described as the age of romanticism.

Still, with all these cautions and reservations, I think it might be useful to speak of the mood of the last few decades as a new romanticism. For one thing, the period was marked by a reaction against the "classical" restraints of a time dominated by T. S. Eliot, the New Critics, the ideal of impersonality, cultural elitism, rationalism, and the idea of tradition not only in the arts but in politics, particularly on the left.

When this reaction set in is difficult to pin down. Its roots can be found earlier in the abstract expressionists, later in pop art, the beats, the beginnings of the new politics, in freer rhythms in poetry and fiction, the rise of a movie culture, and the confusion of pornography with both art and politics. It was also reinforced by the rediscovery of the 19th

century romantics, most explicitly by people like Harold Bloom, by the rehabilitation of Whitman, the renewed interest in Emerson and Thoreau, the decline of the New Criticism and the spread of less disciplined, more temperamental kinds of critical writing. And it may be said to have reached its peak in the celebration of the object and in the general assault on accepted ideas of paintings and sculpture. In politics the logic of the new romanticism led to the substitution of lifestyle, gesture, and moral example for a theory of history and systematic action. In essence, the cult of impersonality was replaced by the cult of personality.

Now, it seems the pendulum is swinging again. People who had been sympathetic to or at least tolerant of the new sensibility are turning against the self-indulgence of current painting and sculpture, and the kind of mindless experiment that shocks only middle-America. The movie culture is on the way out; the past is back in good standing; sex has had its day. Liberals and radicals are tired of the exhibitionist politics that led not only to the decline of the left but to the collapse of the Democratic party in the last election. It would also seem that the populism, common to most romantic movements, that was expressed in the flirtation with the mass media and the egalitarian theories of education, is being dissolved in the disillusionment that usually follows when populist theories are put into practice.

Formulating a shift simplifies it and makes it seem more absolute than it is. But it does look as though we're in for a period of order and moderation, geared more to tradition than to experiment and to discipline more than to self-expression. Unfortunately such a swing is often part of a general turn to the right. And, indeed, conservative thinking has been booming in the last years. But in this respect another political shift may be in the making. It is too soon to tell, but Watergate might have a sobering effect on liberals who thought the main enemy was on the left: now with Watergate as well as the collapse of the New Left, they will have to invent a new right as well as a new New Left.

What effect such a political regrouping would have on the arts and on our thinking is hard to say. For as we know, politics can go one way and art another. But if there is to be any connection between the two, I suspect that in both art and politics the virtues of the middle will be honored; which will make the excesses of the sixties a natural subject for nostalgia.

W. P.

Susan Sontag

THE THIRD WORLD OF WOMEN

Note: The following text was written in July 1972 in response to a questionnaire sent to me and five other women (including Simone de Beauvoir and the Italian Communist deputy Rossana Rossanda) by the editors of Libre, a new Spanish-language political and literary quarterly with a loosely Marxist orientation, edited in Paris. It was published in the October 1972 issue of Libre, No. 3, in a translation by the Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo. Most of the readers of Libre live in Latin America, which explains the painstakingly explicit character of what I wrote. The nature of the magazine's readership explains as well my freedom to assume, when writing my answers, that a revolutionary socialist view of the subject is, at the very least, something to contend with. In the United States, where militant feminism is a livelier and much more widely heard point of view right now than it is anywhere else, discussion tends to be less and less explicit about the root questions, and rarely even alludes to the Marxist analysis. Nevertheless, because the formulation of a political perspective is still everywhere in its early stages, that seems to me to justify printing here what I wrote for a quite different audience.

A few paragraphs first, a sort of prologue, a response to a more general question which you don't ask: *At what stage now is the struggle for women's liberation?*

For thousands of years, practically everyone in the world assumed that it lay in the "nature" of the human species that some people were superior (and should be masters) and other people were inferior (and should be slaves). Only about a hundred and fifty years ago did elements of the ruling classes begin to suspect that slavery was not really, after all, "natural," and that the undeniably servile and culturally underdeveloped character of slaves could be explained by the very fact that these people were slaves, were brought up to be slaves — instead of proving that they deserved to be slaves.

Support for the emancipation of women stands today approximate-

ly where support for the emancipation of slaves stood two centuries ago. Just as throughout the millennia of unquestioning acceptance of slavery, the age-old oppression of women is justified by an appeal to presumed inequalities “natural” to the species, the vast majority of people on this planet — women as well as men — remain convinced that women have a different “nature” than men, and that these “natural” differences make women inferior.

Educated people in urbanized countries, especially those who regard themselves as liberals or socialists, often deny they believe these differences make women inferior. That women differ from men, they argue, does not mean that women are not the equal of men. Their argument is as dishonest as the separate-but-equal argument once used to defend the legal segregation of the races in schools. For the specific content of these supposedly innate differences between women and men imply a scale of values in which the qualities assigned to women are clearly less estimable than those assigned to men. “Masculinity” is identified with competence, autonomy, self-control, ambition, risk-taking, independence, rationality; “femininity” is identified with incompetence, helplessness, irrationality, passivity, noncompetitiveness, being nice. Women are trained for second-class adulthood, most of what is cherished as typically “feminine” behavior being simply behavior that is childish, servile, weak, immature. No wonder men balk at accepting women as their full equals. *Vive la difference* indeed!

Not expecting women to be truthful, or punctual, or expert in handling and repairing machines, or frugal, or muscular, or physically brave makes all women who are — exceptional. Every generation produces a few women of genius (or at least of irrepressible eccentricity) who win special status for themselves. But the historical visibility of the Trung sisters, Joan of Arc, Saint Theresa, Mademoiselle Maupin, George Eliot, Louise Michel, Harriet Tubman, Isabelle Eberhardt, Marie Curie, Rosa Luxemburg, Amelia Earhardt, and the other of that small band, is understood to follow precisely from their possessing qualities that women do not normally have. Such women are credited with “masculine” energy, intelligence, willfulness, and courage. Examples of unusually capable and genuinely independent women do not shake the general presumption of women’s inferiority, any more than the discovery (and favored treatment) of intellectually talented slaves made cultivated Roman slaveowners doubt the naturalness of slavery: the argument from “nature” is self-confirming. Individual lives which do not confirm the argument will always be taken as exceptions, thereby leaving the stereotypes intact.

Historically, or rather prehistorically, the oppression of women must have arisen out of certain practical arrangements to insure their special biological responsibility: childbearing. The elaborate forms of women's oppression — psychological, political, economic, cultural — all refer back to the biological division of labor. But the fact that women bear children while men do not hardly proves that women and men are fundamentally different. It rather indicates how slim is the basis in "nature" for the supposed difference — whereby women's reproductive physiology is converted into a life-vocation, with its appropriately narrow norms of character and temperament. But even physiological "nature" is not an immutable fact with unchanging consequences. It, too, is part of history — and evolves with history. If the whole difference between women and men ultimately rests on the fact that women are busy bearing children, then the circumstances in which that vocation is exercised have been severely modified: if "nature" has supplied the pretext for women's enslavement, then history now supplies the objective conditions for their social and psychological liberation. For it is just this importance of the physiological difference between women and men which is becoming obsolete.

The Industrial Revolution provided the material base for a reconsideration of slavery; when machines were invented that were more productive and efficient than unpaid labor, it became reasonable to free people from legal bondage to work. Now the Ecological Turning Point (increased longevity, plus the population explosion, plus the rapid depletion of natural resources) makes it not only possible but ultimately imperative that most women be freed from all but the most minimal relation to their biological responsibility. Once the reproductive destiny of women shrinks to two, one, or no pregnancies (with every likelihood that, for the first time in history, almost all children born will live to adulthood), the underlying rationale for the repressive definition of women as servile, domestic, primarily childrearing creatures collapses. As the Industrial Revolution encouraged people to rethink the "naturalness" of slavery, so the new ecological era which the planet entered in the middle of the twentieth century is enabling people to rethink the hitherto self-evident "femininity" of women. The "femininity" of women and the "masculinity" of men are morally defective and historically obsolete conceptions. The liberation of women seems to me as much a historical necessity as the abolition of slavery — like abolition, a hopeless-looking cause before it actually triumphs; even more momentous than abolition in its psychic and historical consequences.

But, anachronistic as their oppression may be, women will not be liberated without a hard struggle, a struggle that really does deserve the

adjective "revolutionary." This revolution must be both radical and conservative. It is conservative in the sense that it will reject the ideology of unlimited growth (ever-increasing levels of productivity and consumption; the unlimited cannibalization of the environment) — an ideology shared with equal enthusiasm by the countries which call themselves capitalist and by those which aspire to communism. It is radical in the sense that it will challenge, and remake, the basically authoritarian moral habits common to both capitalist and communist countries. Liberating women is the most radical part of this new revolutionary process.

In opposition to the whole accredited modern tradition about revolution, I am arguing that what used to be called "the woman question" not only exists but exists independently of the issues generally posed by political radicals. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, and Gramsci held that the oppression of women was not a separate problem, but rather one to be absorbed by the class struggle and eventually resolved by the creation of socialism. I do not agree. The fact is, no government which claims to operate on part of Marx's legacy has rethought the condition of women. On the contrary, every communist country has been content with offering women merely liberal improvements in their situations — like increased access to education and jobs and divorces — while preserving intact the overwhelming monopoly of political power by man, and leaving unchanged the structures of repression that characterize private relations between the two sexes. But this striking failure of all countries where left-revolutionary governments have come to power to do anything "radical" for women should not be surprising. In none of the many edifying declarations made by the principal theorists of proletarian revolution in favor of emancipating women has the true complexity of the question ever been grasped. Marxists have not properly estimated the depth of sexism any more than, in setting out to defeat imperialism, they properly estimated the depths of racism.

Now, to the questions you do ask.

1. *What meaning does the idea of women's liberation have for you?*

One often hears now that the liberation of women cannot take place without the liberation of men. The cliché is true, up to a point. Women and men share the same ultimate aim: to gain genuine autonomy, which means participating in (and being let alone by) a society that is not based on alienation and repression. But the cliché is also dangerous, for it implicitly denies that there are stages in the struggle to liberate women. Like many clichés which are true, it disarms thought and pacifies rage. It encourages a passive and merely reformist view of the problem.

(Thus, aptly enough, "the liberation of women equals the liberation of men" is the official slogan of the Swedish government's eminently superficial policies for securing equality for women within the framework of sophisticated liberal capitalism.)

To be sure, every human being in this imperfect world stands in need of liberation — masters as well as slaves, oppressors as well as the oppressed. But a just society cannot be accurately conceived, or fought for, in a unitary or universal way. Liberating a Thai peasant is not the same as liberating a white factory worker in Detroit. The oppression of women does not, in terms of fundamental structures, resemble the oppression of men.

Reasonable-sounding as the idea may be, it is simply not true that the liberation of men and the liberation of women are two parts of a reciprocal process. However much men too are deformed psychologically by sexist stereotypes, these stereotypes do confer undeniable privileges on them. Men have a greater range of behavior available to them than women have, and they have considerably more mobility in the world. (Simply consider the fact that in *most* places she might go in "the world," a woman alone risks rape or physical violence. Basically, a woman is only safe at "home" or when protected by a man.) In the most concrete way, in that he need not always be on guard against predatory assault, a man is always better off than a woman. Men (and women) are oppressed by other men. But all women are oppressed by all men.

The cliché that when women are liberated men will be liberated too shamelessly slides over the raw reality of male domination — as if this were an arrangement in fact arranged by nobody, which suits nobody, which works to nobody's advantage. In fact, the very opposite is true. The domination of men over women is to the advantage of men; the liberation of women will be at the expense of male privilege. Perhaps afterwards, in some happy sense, men will be liberated too — liberated from the tiresome obligation to be "masculine." But allowing oppressors to lay down their psychological burdens is quite another, secondary sense of liberation. The first priority is to liberate the oppressed. Never before in history have the claims of oppressed and oppressors turned out to be, on inspection, quite harmonious. It will not be true this time either.

All women live in an "imperialist" situation in which men are colonialists and women are natives. In so-called Third World countries, the situation of women with respect to men is tyrannically, brutally colonialist. In economically advanced countries (both capitalist and Communist) the situation of women is neocolonialist: the segregation

of women has been liberalized; the use of physical force against women has declined; men delegate some of their authority, their rule is less overtly institutionalized. But the same basic relations of inferiority and superiority, of powerlessness and power, of cultural underdevelopment and cultural privilege, prevail between women and men in all countries.

Any serious program for liberating women must start from the premise that liberation is not just about *equality* (the "liberal" idea). It is about *power*. Women cannot be liberated without reducing the power of men. Their liberation not only means changing consciousness and social structures in ways that will transfer to women much of the power monopolized by men. The nature of power itself will thereby change, since throughout history power has itself been defined in sexist terms — being identified with a normative, supposedly innate masculine taste for aggressiveness and physical coercion, and with the ceremonies and prerogatives of all-male groupings in war, government, religion, sport, and commerce. Anything less than a change in who has power and what power is, is not liberation but pacification. Changes that are not profound buy off the resentment that threatens established authority. Ameliorating an unstable and too oppressive rule — as when old empires replace colonialist by neocolonialist forms of exploitation — actually serves to regenerate the existing forms of dominance.

To advocate that women make a common front with men to bring about their mutual liberation pulls a veil over the harsh realities of the power relations that determine all dialogue between the sexes. It is not for women to assume the task of liberating men, when they have first to liberate themselves — which means exploring the grounds of enmity, unsweetened for the moment by the dream of reconciliation. Women must change themselves; they must change each other, without worrying about how this will affect men. The consciousness of women will change only when they think about themselves, and forget about what is good for their men. Supposing that these changes can be undertaken in collaboration with men minimizes (and trivializes) the range and depths of women's struggle.

If women change, men will be forced to change. But these changes in men will not occur without considerable resistance. No ruling class ever ceded its real privileges without a struggle. The very structure of society is founded on male privilege, and men will not cede their privileges simply because doing so is more humane or just. Men may make concessions, reluctantly granting women more "civil rights." In most countries now, women can vote and attend institutions of higher education and are permitted to train for the professions. Within the next twenty years, they will get equal pay for equal work and be granted ef-

fective ownership of their own bodies (through easy access to contraceptives and the legalization of abortion). But these concessions, however desirable they may be, do not challenge the fundamental attitudes that maintain women as second-class citizens nor touch the root of male privileges.

A radical, as opposed to a liberal, change in the status of women will abolish the mystique of "nature." Women should work toward an end to *all* stereotyping of any kind, positive as well as negative, according to people's sexual identity. Changing the laws that discriminate against women in specific situations (with respect to suffrage, entering into contracts, access to education, and employment) is not enough. The forms of work, sexual customs, the idea of family life have to be altered; language itself, which crudely enshines the ancient bias against women, cannot remain unaffected. For, however advanced our ideas, every time we speak we continue to affirm the superiority (activity) of men and the inferiority (passivity) of women. It is "grammatically correct" to assume that agents, active persons are men. Grammar, the ultimate arena of sexist brainwashing, conceals the very existence of women — except in special situations. Thus we *must* say "he" when we mean a person who might be of either sex. "Man" is the accepted way to refer to all human beings; "men" is the literary way of saying people. (As "men in dark times," a line from a poem by Brecht and the title of one of Hannah Arendt's books, means people in dark times. Indeed, of the ten people Arendt writes about in her brilliant, noble book two are women. But one, Isak Dinesen, adopted a male pseudonym and the other, Rosa Luxemburg, was, as the jacket copy comments coyly, "the manliest of them all!") The pronoun that substitutes for nouns like student, worker, citizen, artist, public official, athlete, industrialist is "he." Language is not, of course, the source of the prejudice that identifies "men" as the human race, and associates most human activities with men only. Language merely expresses the sexist order that has prevailed throughout history.

The women's movement has already made the sexist bias of grammar feel offensive to a vocal minority of women. Sensitizing increasing numbers of people to sexism in language — as most people have only recently become alert to racist clichés in language (and art) — is an important task. More generally, people must be helped to wake up to the profound misogyny expressed on all levels of human interchange, not just in laws but in the detail of everyday life: in forms of politeness and in the conventions (clothes, gestures, etc.) which polarize sexual identity, and in the flow of images (in art, news, and advertizing) which perpetuate sexist stereotypes. These attitudes will change only when

women free themselves from their "nature" and start creating and inhabiting another history.

2. *In the process of liberating women, do you give equal importance to economic liberation and to sexual liberation?*

The question seems to me to reveal the underlying weakness of the very concept of "liberation." Unless made more specific, "women's liberation" is an empty goal — and one which blurs the focus and dilutes the energy of women's struggle. I am not sure that the economic and the sexual are two different kinds of liberation. But suppose that they are or, at least, that they can be considered separately. Without more clarity about what women are being liberated from and for, it is meaningless to ask whether both liberations are equally important.

The notion of "economic liberation" can be used to cover up the real issues. That women have access to a wide variety of jobs outside the home for which they are properly paid is certainly a primary, unnegotiable demand. The key to women's psychological and cultural underdevelopment is the fact that most women do not support themselves — neither in the literal (economic) nor metaphoric (psychological, cultural) sense. But it is hardly enough for women to secure the *possibility* of earning money through the opening up of more jobs, through the creation of free facilities for the care of young children. Work must not be merely an option, an alternative to the still more common (and normative) "career" of housewife and mother. It must be *expected* that most women will work, that they will be economically independent (whether married or not) just as men are. Without work, women will never break the chains of dependence on men — the minimal prerequisite for their becoming fully adult. Unless they work, and their work is usually as valuable as their husbands', married women have not even the chance of gaining real power over their own lives which means the power to change their lives. The arts of psychological coercion and conciliation for which women are notorious — flattery, charm, wheedling, glamor, tears — are a servile substitute for real influence and autonomy.

Simply being able to work, however, hardly means that a woman is "liberated." Large numbers of women already do work, and of these a minority already earns wages that guarantee economic independence; yet most women who work remain as dependent as ever on men. The reason is that employment itself is organized along sexist lines. The colonized status of women is confirmed and indeed strengthened by the sexist division of labor. Women do not participate gainfully in modern work on the same footing as men. They play a supportive, back-up role in the economy. What they do in "the world" tends to reproduce

their image as "household" (serving and nurturing) creatures; they are considered unfit for large executive responsibilities. Thus, women cannot be said to be economically liberated until they perform *all* activities now performed by men, on the same terms (with respect to wages, standards of performance, exposure to risk) as men — thereby relinquishing the prerogatives of the fool, the child, and the servant. Their economic liberation is essential not merely to the psychological and moral well-being of individual women. Until they become important to the economy, not just as a reserve labor pool but because in large numbers they possess the major professional and executive skills, women have no means of exercising political power, which means gaining control of institutions and having an effective say in how society will change in the coming decades. Once again: liberation means *power* — or it hardly means anything at all.

The notion of "sexual liberation" seems to me even more suspect. The ancient double standard, which imputes to women less sexual energy and fewer sexual desires than men (and punishes them for behavior condoned in men), is clearly a way of keeping women in their place. But to demand for women the same privileges of sexual experimentation that men have is not enough, since the very conception of sexuality is an instrument of repression. Most sexual relationships act out the attitudes which oppress women and perpetuate male privilege. Merely to remove the onus placed on the sexual expressiveness of women is a hollow victory if the sexuality they become freer to enjoy remains the old one that converts women into objects. The mores of late, urban capitalist society have been for some time, as everyone has noticed, increasingly more "permissive," penalizing women much less than before for behaving like sexual beings outside the context of monogamous marriage. But this already "freer" sexuality mostly reflects a spurious idea of freedom: the right of each person, briefly, to exploit and dehumanize someone else.

Without a change in the very norms of sexuality, the liberation of women is a meaningless goal. Sex as such is not liberating for women. Neither is more sex.

The question is: *what* sexuality are women to be liberated to enjoy? The only sexual ethic liberating for women is one which challenges the primacy of genital heterosexuality. A nonrepressive society, a society in which women are subjectively and objectively the genuine equals of men, will necessarily be an androgynous society. Why? Because the only other plausible terms on which the oppression of women could be ended are that men and women decide to live apart, and that is impossible. Separatism does remain plausible as a way of putting an end to the oppression of "colored" peoples by the white race. Conceivably, the dif-

ferent races originating in different parts of the planet could agree to live quite separately again (with the habits and mentalities of each strictly protected against all incursions of cultural as well as economic imperialism). But women and men will undoubtedly always cohabit. If, therefore, the answer to sexism — unlike racism — is not even conceivably separatism, then defending the distinct moral and aesthetic “traditions” of each sex (to preserve something equivalent to “cultural plurality”) and attacking the single standard of intellectual excellence or rationality as male “cultural imperialism” (to revalidate the unknown and despised “women’s culture”) are misleading tactics in the struggle to liberate women.

The aim of struggle should not be to protect the differences between the two sexes but to undermine them. To create a nonrepressive relation between women and men means to erase as far as possible the conventional demarcation lines that have been set up between the two sexes, to reduce the tension between women and men that arises from “otherness.” As everyone has noticed, there has been a lively tendency among young people in recent years to narrow and even confuse sex differences in clothes, hair styles, gestures, taste. But this first step toward depolarizing the sexes, partly coopted within capitalist forms of consumership as mere “style” (the commerce of unisex boutiques), will be denied its political implications unless the tendency takes root at a deeper level.

The more profound depolarization of the sexes must take place in the world of work and, increasingly, in sexual relations themselves. As “otherness” is reduced, some of the energy of sexual attraction between the sexes will decline. Women and men will certainly continue to make love and to pair off in couples. But women and men will no longer *primarily* define each other as potential sexual partners. In a nonrepressive nonsexist society, sexuality will in one sense have a more important role than it has today — because it will be more diffused. Homosexual choices will be as valid and respectable as heterosexual choices; both will grow out of a genuine bisexuality. (Exclusive homosexuality — which, like exclusive heterosexuality, is learned — would be much less common in a nonsexist society than it is at present.) But in such a society, sexuality will in another sense be less important than it is now — because sexual relations will no longer be hysterically craved as a substitute for genuine freedom and for so many other pleasures (intimacy, intensity, feeling of belonging, blasphemy) which this society frustrates.

3. *In your opinion, what is the relationship between the struggle for women’s liberation and the class struggle? Do you believe the first must be subordinated to the second?*

I see little relation at present between the class struggle and the

struggle to liberate women. The double content of modern left-revolutionary politics — the overthrow of one class by another within a nation, and the freeing of colonized peoples from imperialist control — is basically irrelevant to the struggle of women as women. Women are neither a class nor a nation. Politically radical women may well prefer to participate in existing insurgent movements than to limit their energies, as they see it, to the struggle of women. But in doing so they should realize that, at the most, all that such multi-issue revolutionary politics (like parliamentary party politics) offers women is reformist gains, the promise of formal “equality.”

Which level of struggle should come first? I don’t see how one can take a general position about that. The priorities of struggle vary from nation to nation, from historical moment to historical moment — and depend, within a given nation, on one’s race and one’s social class. It seems beyond question that the liberation of women in Vietnam has to be subordinated at the present time to the struggle for national liberation. In the affluent countries, however, the liberation of women is a much more immediately relevant issue — both in itself and for its usefulness in radicalizing people for other forms of struggle. (For instance, to explore the nature of women’s oppression helps one to understand the nature of imperialism. And the other way around.)

As I see it, the main point about the relationship of the struggle of women to what Marxist-oriented revolutionary movements define as the central struggle, the class struggle, is the following. To liberate women requires a cultural revolution that will attack attitudes and mental habits which otherwise could well survive the reconstruction of economic relationships that is the goal of the class struggle. The position of women could, conceivably, be scarcely affected by a change in class relationships. Because Marx and Engels were humanists, heirs of the Enlightenment, they denounced the oppression of women under capitalism. But the traditional “feminism” of Marx and his successors is not *logically* connected with the Marxist analysis. (Neither, I would argue, is Freud’s coarse “antifeminism” *logically* connected with the basic ideas of psychoanalytic theory.) Socialism will not inevitably bring about the liberation of women. Nevertheless, only in a society that one calls, for want of a better name, socialist, would it be *possible* to invent and institutionalize forms of life that would liberate women. Therefore, though the struggle to build socialism and the cause of women’s liberation are hardly identical, militant feminists do have a vested interest in the fortunes of a revolutionary socialist movement and good reason to be, if only tacitly, allies — as they have reason to be the enemies of all right-revolutionary (or fascist) movements, which always preach the reinforcement of male privilege and the subservience of women.

4. *Do you think the fact that the work of a housewife is unsalaried and has no exchange value on the labor market makes women a separate class existing apart from other economic classes? Do you view patriarchal oppression as a principal or secondary contradiction in modern society?*

No. The fact that "housework," which is defined as women's work, is physical and, unlike work done in the "world," unpaid, does not put women into a separate economic class. Women do not form a class any more than men do. Like men, women make up half the membership of every class. The wives, sisters, and daughters of rich men participate in the oppression of the poor; by virtue of their class membership rather than their sex, a minority of women oppress other women. If a label is needed, women could perhaps be considered a caste. But this is only an analogy. There is no suitable label to be borrowed from other vocabularies of social analysis. To suppose that women constitute a class makes no more sense than to suppose that blacks are a class. The human species is divided into two sexes (and "caste"-type relations based on sexual identity), as well as a plurality of races (with "caste"-type relations based mainly on color). The oppression of one class by another is only one form of oppression. The structures built around the existence of two sexes, like those built around the existence of many races, are irreducible to structures built around the existence of social classes — although, obviously, oppressions can and often do overlap.

I detect in this question a pious hope that the oppression of women could be blamed on a particular form of society, a particular set of class arrangements. But it can't. If socialism — at least as it exists so far — is not self-evidently the solution, neither is capitalism self-evidently the culprit. Women have always been treated as inferior, have always been marginal politically and culturally. The oppression of women constitutes the most fundamental type of repression in organized societies. That is, it is the most *ancient* form of oppression, pre-dating all oppression based on class, caste, and race. It is the most primitive form of hierarchy.

Because this is so I do not see how "patriarchal oppression" (your term) can be considered as any kind of contradiction, either principal or secondary. On the contrary, the structure of this society is precisely based on patriarchal oppression, the undoing of which will modify the most deeply rooted habits of friendship and love, the conceptions of work, the ability to wage war (which is profoundly nourished by sexist anxieties), and the mechanisms of power. The very nature of power in organized societies is founded on sexist models of conduct. Power is defined in terms of, and feeds on, machismo.

Modern industrial society certainly contains many contradictory

structures and ideologies, but the struggle to liberate women cannot be expected to succeed, in my opinion, if it is mainly directed toward trying to aggravate and intensify already existing contradictions; the task is not so much to exploit a contradiction as to dislodge this most profoundly rooted of structures. The women's movement must lead to a critical assault on the very nature of the state — the millennial tyranny of patriarchal rule being the low-keyed model of the peculiarly modern tyranny of the fascist state.

I would maintain that fascism, far from being a political aberration whose greatest plausibility was confined to Europe and the interval between the two World Wars, is the *normal* condition of the modern state: the condition to which the governments of all industrially advanced countries tend. Fascism, in other words, is the natural development of the values of the patriarchal state applied to the conditions (and contradictions) of twentieth century "mass" societies. Virginia Woolf was altogether correct when she declared in the late 1930s, in a remarkable tract called *Three Guineas*, that the fight to liberate women is a fight against fascism.

5. *It is often said that most salaried work in present day society is alienating. In spite of this, do you advise women to seek salaried employment as a means of liberation?*

However alienating most salaried work may be, for women it is still liberating to have a job, if only because it frees them from the confinement of domesticity and parasitism. But the commitment to work is only a first step, of course. Women will never be autonomous unless they participate in society's work on terms of complete equality. Women must break out of the ghettos of work in which they are isolated: jobs that continue to exploit their life-long training to be servile, to be both supportive and parasitical, to be unadventurous. For a woman to leave "home" to go out into "the world" and work rarely carries a full commitment to "the world," that is, achievement; in most cases, it is strictly understood to be just a way of earning money, of supplementing the family income. Women fill very few corporate or political posts, and contribute only a tiny contingent to the liberal professions (apart from teaching). Except in communist countries, they are virtually barred from jobs that involve an expert, intimate relation to machines or an aggressive use of the body, or that carry any physical danger or sense of adventure, or that directly compete with (instead of support) what men do. Besides being less well paid, most employment available to women has a low ceiling of advancement and gives meager outlet to normal wishes to be active and to make decisions. The result is of these prejudices is that virtually all outstanding work by women in capitalist

countries has been voluntary, for few women can stand up to the disapproval unleashed when they deviate from the stereotypes of “feminine” submissiveness and illogicality. (Thus, it is disparaging to describe a woman as “ambitious” or “tough” or “intellectual”; and she will be called “castrating” for behavior that would be viewed, in a man, as normal or even commendable aggressiveness.)

Granted that almost all jobs available in modern societies could be described as alienating, I am more impressed by the double alienation from which women suffer — by being denied even those limited satisfactions that men can derive from work. By entering the world of work in its present forms, women have much to gain. They acquire skills, by which they can take care of themselves and organize themselves better. And they acquire a specific arena of struggle, in each job or profession, where they can press the demands for their liberation.

These demands must go beyond “equality” as that may be achieved between individuals in the work situations to which women are admitted. Far more important than getting the same pay for the same work (though that minimal “liberal” demand as not yet been met in *any* country in the world, including China) is breaking down the sex-stereotyping according to which the world of work is organized. Women must become surgeons, agronomists, lawyers, mechanics, soldiers, electricians, astronauts, factory executives, orchestra conductors, sound engineers, chess players, construction workers, pilots — and in numbers large enough so that their presence is no longer remarked. (When women become the vast majority doing a job formerly monopolized by men, as in the medical profession in the Soviet Union, the challenge to sex-stereotyping is much slighter. The result is that the hitherto “masculine” role of doctor has become a “feminine” role.)

As long as the system of sex segregation in work remains strong, most people — women as well as men — will continue to rationalize it by insisting that women lack the physical strength or the capacity for rational judgment or the emotional self-control to do many jobs. As that system weakens, women will get more competent. And when they are not merely tolerated in but *expected* to perform the jobs from which they are now barred, large numbers of women will in fact be able to do them.

When work becomes fully desegregated sexually, women will be better qualified to join with their co-workers who are men in questioning its fundamental terms, as presently defined. The bureaucratic style in which work in modern society is laid out must be redesigned to provide more democratic, decentralized ways of planning and making decisions. Most important of all, the very ideal of “productivity” (and

consumership) must be challenged. The economy of affluent countries operates by a division of function that runs along sexual lines: men are defined as “producers” and tool-users, while women (and adolescents) are defined principally as “consumers.” Unless this distinction is subverted, the full admission of women to the work men do will just double the ranks of that great army of psychologically alienated “producers” already drafted into the ecologically suicidal campaign of manufacturing unlimited amounts of goods (and waste).

The rethinking about work that inevitably must take place could well be done by the presently existing elites, and women may find that men have made the key decisions without them. The new structures of work to be devised in the next two decades (part of whose character will be determined by the need to have much *less* work of many kinds) could still perpetuate the sexist system intact — confining women to the role of parasitical, deferring helper. This can be prevented from happening only if women invade the world of work now, even while it is still “alienating,” with a militant feminist consciousness.

6. *In what way do you envisage the struggle for women's liberation: (a) in the framework of a revolutionary/political organization or (b) exclusively in the women's movement?*

It is good news whenever a radical political organization supports the cause of women — particularly when the organization is one, like the Black Panthers, that had been notorious for its blatant sexism. But I am not optimistic about the long-term benefits of such support. The alliance seems more natural than it really is. Revolutionary struggle usually does tend to enfranchise women as historical agents and to override sexist stereotypes in a quick, dramatic way. Think of what women have done (have been “allowed” to do) in the Commune, the Russian revolution, the French and Italian resistance during World War II, the struggle to create the State of Israel, the Cuban revolution, the thirty years of Vietnamese liberation struggle, the Palestinian guerrilla movement, the urban guerrilla movements in Latin America — in relation to what women were allowed to do (thought capable of doing) in each of these societies just before the start of armed struggle. But the enfranchisement is only temporary. After the struggle ends, whether in victory or defeat, women are inevitably demobilized rapidly and encouraged to return to their traditional, passive, ahistorical roles. (Later their participation will be ignored or glossed over by historians and ideologists — as, for instance, in France, where there is an astonishing silence today about the numerous fighters and martyrs of the Resistance who were women. If their deeds are told at all, they will be fitted into imagery that confirms the leadership of men, as in that eminently sexist

recent Chinese film ostensibly made to honor and praise the women soldiers in Mao's army in the 1930s, *The Red Detachment of Women*.)

To break radically with sexual stereotypes, even if just temporarily seems to come easily to political radicals only when they engage in insurrection, in "people's war," in guerrilla struggle, or in underground resistance to foreign occupation. In situations that fall short of military-type urgency, the treatment of women in radical political organizations is in fact anything but exemplary. Despite their often-proclaimed feminist "views," the internal life of almost all radical organizations, in or out of power—from the official Communist parties to the new Left and semianarchist groups active since the 1960s—uncritically condones and promotes all sorts of sexist "habits."

Thus, the present wave of feminism was born out of the painful awakening of women in the largest radical student organization in America in the 1960s to the fact that they were being treated like second-class members. Women were never listened to with the same seriousness at meetings; it was always women members who were asked (or volunteered) to take the minutes, or to leave a meeting in progress to go into the kitchen to make coffee. Often chivalrously protected by their men comrades from police violence during demonstrations, they were invariably excluded from positions of leadership. To be sure, the complacent sexism of radical organizations has lessened somewhat, at least in America, precisely because of the protest these women made. At first only an isolated, ridiculed minority, they heralded a new level of consciousness on the part of many women—which, having started in America, is now belatedly spreading (though in a tamer and more limited way) to Western Europe. In the 1970s women seeking to liberate themselves and other women can find more allies than ever among radical men. But working within existing revolutionary organizations is not enough. At this point, it is not even central.

Now and for some time to come, I think, the primary role must be played by women's movements. However many radical men can now be counted as allies (and they are not *that* numerous), women have to conduct the main part of the struggle themselves. Women must form groups in each class, each occupation, each community, to sustain and encourage different levels of struggle and emerging consciousness. (For example: all-women professional collectives—of doctors who will treat only women patients, of lawyers and accountants who will handle only women clients—as well as all-women rock groups, farms, film-making crews, small businesses, and so forth.) Politically, women will not find a militant voice until they organize in groups which they lead—just as blacks did not find their true political militancy as long as they were

represented mainly by integrated organizations, which meant, in practice, being led by benevolent, well-educated, liberal whites. One of the purposes of political action is to educate those who stage the action. At the present point of women's political underdevelopment, working with men (even sympathetic men) slows down the process by which women learn how to be politically mature.

Women have to learn, first of all, how to talk to each other. Like blacks (and other colonized peoples), women have trouble organizing, are not easily disposed to respect each other and to take each other seriously. They are used to leadership, support, and approval by men. It is therefore all the more important that they do learn to organize politically by themselves, and try to reach other women. Their mistakes are at least *their* mistakes.

More generally: people who favor women working for their liberation in concert with men tacitly deny the realities of women's oppression. Such a policy insures that all struggle on behalf of women will be moderate and, ultimately, cooptable. It is to arrange, in advance, that nothing "radical" will happen, that the consciousness of women will not change in a profound way. For integrated actions, those taken alongside of men, necessarily limit the freedom of women to think "radically." The sole chance women have to effect that deep change in their consciousness required for their liberation is by organizing separately. Consciousness changes only through confrontation, in situations in which appeasement is not possible.

Thus, there are certain activities that only all-women's groups can — or will want to — perform. Only groups composed entirely of women will be diversified enough in their tactics, and sufficiently "extreme." Women should lobby, demonstrate, march. They should take karate lessons. They should whistle at men in the streets, raid beauty parlors, picket toy manufacturers who produce sexist toys, convert in sizeable numbers to militant lesbianism, operate their own free psychiatric and abortion clinics, provide feminist divorce counselling, establish make-up withdrawal centers, adopt their mothers' family names as their last names, deface billboard advertising that insults women, disrupt public events by singing in honor of the docile wives of male celebrities and politicians, collect pledges to renounce alimony and giggling, bring law suits for defamation against the mass-circulation "women's magazines," conduct telephone harassment campaigns against male psychiatrists who have sexual relations with their women patients, organize beauty contests for men, put up feminist candidates for all public offices. Though no single action is necessary, the "extremist" acts are valuable in themselves, because they help women to raise their own consciousness. And, however

much people claim to be shocked or put off by such acts, their rhetoric *does* have a positive effect upon the silent majority. Performed by even a small minority, this guerrilla theater forces millions to become defensive about hitherto barely-conscious sexist attitudes, accustoming them to the idea that these attitudes are at least not self-evident. (I do not exclude the utility of real guerrilla violence as well.)

Undeterred by the fear of confirming sexist clichés (e.g., women as creatures of emotion, incapable of being detached, objective), militant groups must commit themselves to behavior that does violate the stereotypes of femininity. A common way of reinforcing the political passivity of women has been to say they will be more effective and influential if they act with “dignity,” if they don’t violate decorum, if they remain charming. Women should show their contempt for this form of intimidation disguised as friendly advice. Women will be much more effective politically if they are rude, shrill, and — by sexist standards — “unattractive.” They will be met with ridicule, which they should do more than bear stoically. They should, indeed, welcome it. Only when their acts are described as “ridiculous” and their demands are dismissed as “exaggerated” and “unreasonable” can militant women be sure they are on the right track.

7. And in this case, what will be the long-term and the short-term objectives?

The important difference is not between short-term and long-term objectives but, as I have already indicated, between objectives which are reformist (or liberal) and those which are radical. From suffrage onward, most of the objectives that women have sought have been reformist.

An example of the difference. To demand that women receive equal pay for equal work is reformist; to demand that women have access to all jobs and professions, without exception, is radical. The demand for equal wages does not attack the system of sexual stereotyping. Paying a woman the same wages a man gets *if* she holds the same job he does establishes a merely formal kind of equity. When roughly half the people doing every kind of job are women, when all forms of employment and public responsibility become fully coeducational, sexual stereotyping will end — not before.

In underlining this difference once again, I am not suggesting that the reformist gains are negligible. They are eminently worth struggling for — as evidenced by the fact that these demands are, for most people, too “radical.” Most of the reformist demands are far from being granted. In that slow procession toward fulfilling the reformist demands, the Communist countries have taken a clear lead. Next, but well behind

them in terms of the degree of "liberal" enlightenment of public policy, come the capitalist countries with a Protestant background, notably Sweden, Denmark, England, Holland, the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Lagging far behind to the rear are those countries with a Catholic cultural base, like France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, and the countries of Central and South America — where married women cannot buy and dispose of property without the signature of their husbands; and where the right to divorce, not to mention the legality of abortion, remains fiercely contested. And still further behind the Latin countries, almost out of sight, are the countries with a Moslem culture — where women are still subjected to ferociously strict forms of social segregation, economic exploitation, and sexual surveillance. . . .

Despite the cultural unevenness with which the situation of women is being ameliorated, I would predict that most of the reformist demands will be granted in most countries by the end of the century. My point is that then the struggle will have only begun. The granting of these demands can leave intact all the oppressive and patronizing attitudes that make women into second-class citizens. Women have to feel, and learn to express, their anger.

Women must start making concrete demands — first of all upon themselves and then upon men. For a start, women can note their acceptance of full adult status by symbolic acts, like not changing their last names when they marry. They can wean themselves from the enslaving concern with their personal appearance by which they consent to make themselves into objects. (By giving up make-up, and the reassuring ministrations of beauty parlors, they symbolically renounce the narcissism and vanity that are, insultingly, deemed normal in women.) They can refuse the rituals of male gallantry which dramatize their inferior position and covert it into a seduction. As often as not women should light men's cigarettes for them, carry their suitcases, and fix their flat tires. Even the trivial acts by which women ignore preassigned "feminine" roles have weight, helping to educate both women and men. They are the necessary prologue to any serious consideration on the part of women of the institutional framework for their liberation. This thinking must coincide with the creation of experimental institutions run by women, for women — living collectives, work collectives, schools, day-care centers, medical centers — which will embody the solidarity of women, their increasingly politicized consciousness and their practical strategies for outwitting the system of sexual stereotyping.

The liberation of women has both short-term and long-term political meaning. Changing the status of women is not only a political objective in itself but prepares for (as well as constitutes part of) that radical

change in the structure of consciousness and society which is what I understand by revolutionary socialism. It is not simply that the liberation of women need not wait for the advent of socialism, so defined. It cannot wait.

I do not think socialism can triumph unless big victories for feminism have been won beforehand. The liberation of women is a necessary preparation for building a just society — not the other way around, as Marxists always claim. For if it does happen the other way around, women are likely to find their liberation a fraud. Should the transformation of society according to revolutionary socialism be undertaken without a prior militant independent women's movement, women will find that they have merely passed from the hegemony of one oppressive moral ethic to another.

8. *Do you consider that the family is an obstacle for the liberation of woman?*

Certainly the modern "nuclear family" operates to oppress women. And little consolation is to be had by considering other shapes that the family is known to have taken in the past and has today outside the societies of "European" type. Virtually *all* known forms of the family define women in ways that subordinate them to men — keeping them within the "home" while investing public power exclusively in the hands of men, who organize in all-male groups outside the family. In the chronology of human lives, the family is the first and psychologically the most irrefutable school for sexism. It is as small children, through the systematically contrasting ways in which girls and boys are treated (dressed, talked to, praised, punished), that the norms of dependency and narcissism are instilled in girls. Growing up, children learn the different expectations they may have for themselves from the models of mother and father: the fundamentally dissimilar geography of commitment that women and men make to family life.

The family is an institution organized around the exploitation of women as full-time inhabitants of the family's space. Hence, for women to work means relieving at least some part of their oppression. Working at a paid job, any job, a woman is no longer just a family creature. But she can still continue to be exploited, as a now part-time family creature still saddled with nearly full-time duties. Women who have gained the freedom to go out into "the world" but still have the responsibility for marketing, cooking, cleaning, and the children when they return from work have simply doubled their labor. This is the plight of almost all married working women in both capitalist and Communist countries. (The oppressiveness of women's double load is particularly stark in the Soviet Union: with more diversity in the jobs open to women than in,

say, the United States; with its consumer-society style of life just getting underway; and with hardly any "service" facilities.) Even when the wife holds down a job that is as honorable or as physically tiring as her husband's, when they both come home it still seems natural to the husband (and usually to the wife) that he rest while she prepares the dinner and cleans up afterwards. Such exploitation will continue, even with the rising number of women entering the labor force, as long as their work so rarely challenges the notion of the "feminine" role.

Because most jobs that women get are conceived to be suited to their "feminine" aptitudes, most men and women experience no contradiction between that "woman's job" and the traditionally "feminine" arts (assistant, nurse, cook) that women are expected to exercise at home. Only when all sorts of jobs are filled by many women will it no longer seem natural to a husband to let his wife do all or most of the housework. What appear to be two quite different demands must be made jointly: that the range of employment no longer be determined along the lines of sexual identity, and that men share fully in the traditionally "feminine" work of domestic life. Both demands encounter intense resistance. Men find both demands embarrassing, threatening, though they seem to be made slightly less uncomfortable these days by the first than by the second — demonstrating that the grammar of family life (like language itself) is the most intense and stubborn fortress of sexist assumptions.

In an arrangement of family life which would not oppress women, men will take part in all domestic activities. (And women will be expected to give considerable time to "outside" obligations that have nothing to do with their families.) But the solution involves more than adjusting the degree of participation of men, the ideal being an equal sharing of all chores and responsibilities. These activities must themselves be re-thought. The family does not have to be a sealed-off molecule, all of whose activities belong to "it." Many domestic tasks would be more efficiently and pleasantly carried out in a communal space — as they were in premodern societies. There is no genuine benefit in each family having (if it could) its private babysitter or maid; that is, freelance women hired to share or take over a wife's unpaid, unofficial servant role. Similarly, there is no reason (besides selfishness and fear) for each family to have its own washing machine, car, dishwasher, television set, and so forth. While private human (mostly female) domestic service is disappearing, except for the extremely rich, as countries pass from premodern economies to industrialization and consumerism, private mechanical services proliferate. Most of the new mechanical servants and services whose acquisition by the "individual" family is the primary

article of faith of the consumer society could well be the common property of groups of families — thus reducing unnecessary duplication of labor; restraining competition, acquisitiveness; lessening waste. Democratizing family tasks is one of the steps necessary to change the oppressive definitions of the role of wife and husband, mother and father. It will also help break down the walls constructed in all modern industrial societies that separate one tiny family from another, thereby putting such devastating psychological strains on the members of each family.

The modern “nuclear” family is a psychological and moral disaster. It is a prison of sexual repression, a playing-field of inconsistent moral laxity, a museum of possessiveness, a guilt-producing factory, and a school of selfishness. Yet despite the frightful price its members pay in anxiety and a backlog of murderous feelings, the modern family does allow some positive experiences. Particularly in capitalist society today, as Juliet Mitchell has pointed out, the family is often the only place where something approximating unalienated personal relations (of warmth, trust, dialogue, uncompetitiveness, loyalty, spontaneity, sexual pleasure, fun) are still permitted. It is no accident that one of the slogans of capitalist society, the form of society which promotes the greatest alienation in work and all communal bonds, is the sanctity of the family. (By the family is meant, though never said, the patriarchal “nuclear” family only.) Family life is the anachronistic reserve of exactly those “human-scale” values which industrial urban society destroys — but which it must somehow manage to conserve.

To survive, that is, to extract the maximum productivity and appetite for consumption from its citizenry, capitalism (and its cousin, Russian-style communism) must continue to grant a limited existence to the values of nonalienation. Thus it awards these values a privileged or protected status in an institution, the family, that is economically and politically innocuous. This is the ideological secret behind the very form of the modern nuclear family: a family unit too small in numbers, too stripped down, too confined in its living space (archetypally, the three- or four-room city apartment) to be viable as an economic unit or politically connected with sources of power. Early in the modern era, the home lost its ancient role as a site of altars and ritual; religious functions came to be entirely monopolized by “churches,” whose activities the family members leave the house to attend as *individuals*. Since the late eighteenth century, the family has been forced to cede its right to educate (or not educate) its children to the centralized nation-state, which operates “public schools” that the children of each family are legally obliged to attend as *individuals*. The nuclear family, also known as the basic family, is the useless family — an ideal invention of urban industrial society. Its

function is just that: to be useless, to be a refuge. Deprived of all economic, religious, and educational functions, the family exists solely as a source of emotional warmth in a cold world.

The glorification of the family is not only a piece of rank hypocrisy; it reveals an important structural contradiction in the ideology and workings of capitalist society. The ideological function of the modern family is manipulative — more accurately, self-manipulative. This does not mean we can dismiss what goes on in family life as entirely fraudulent. Genuine values are incarnated in the nuclear family. Indeed, were it not for even that poor form of family life that flourishes today, people would lead far more alienated lives than they already do. But the strategy will not work indefinitely. The contradiction between the values family life is charged with preserving and the values promoted by industrial mass society as a whole is, ultimately, an untenable one. Families are, in fact, less and less able to perform well this assigned task, the task which justifies the family in its modern form. The function of the family as ethical museum in industrial society is deteriorating; even there, “human-scale” values are leaking away. Industrial mass society stores the values of nonalienation in a safe place, an institution that is (by definition) apolitical. But no place is safe. The acids of the world “outside” are so strong that the family is becoming increasingly poisoned, more and more contaminated by society — which intrudes directly, for instance, in the homogenized voices of the television set in every living room.

To advocate “destroying” the family, because it is authoritarian, is a facile cliché. The vice of family life throughout history is not its authoritarianism, but that authority *pe se* is founded on relations of ownership. Husbands “own” wives; parents “own” their children. (This is only one of the many similarities between the status of women and the status of children. Thus the sex whose members are *defined* as adult, and therefore as physically responsible for themselves, gallantly forces “women and children first” off sinking ships. In Spain, no married woman may hold a job, open a bank account, apply for a passport, or sign a contract without her husband’s written permission — just like a child. Women, like children, have essentially the status of minors; they are wards of their husbands, as children are the wards of their parents.) Even the modern nuclear family in its liberalized Northern European and North American form is still based, though less blatantly so, on treating women and children as property.

The family based on ownership is the target: people should not be treated as property; adults should not be treated as minors. But some forms of authority make sense in family life. The question is what kind

of authority, which depends on what the base of its legitimacy is. The restructuring of the family required for the emancipation of women means subtracting from the authority available to family arrangements one of its principal forms of legitimacy: the authority that men have over women. Although the family is the institution in which the oppression of women is originally incarnated, eliminating this oppression will not dissolve the family. Nor will a nonsexist family be without *any* idea of legitimate authority. When family arrangements are no longer a hierarchy dictated by sex roles, they will still have certain hierarchical features dictated by differences in age. A nonsexist family will not be completely unstructured, though it will be "open."

Precisely because the family is a singular institution — the only institution that modern society insists on defining as "private" — reconstructing the family is an extremely delicate project, and less amenable to the kind of advance planning for change that one can apply to other institutions. (What to do about schools, for instance, in order to make them nonsexist, as well as less authoritarian in other ways, is much clearer.) The reconstruction of family life must be part of the construction of new, but still small-scale, forms of community. This is where the women's movement can be particularly useful, by bringing into existence, within the context of today's society, alternative institutions that will pioneer the development of a new praxis of group life.

In any case, nothing can be done about the family by fiat. And, undoubtedly, some form of family life will continue. What is desirable is not to destroy the family, but to destroy the opposition (particularly entrenched in capitalist countries) between "home" and "the world." This opposition is decadent. It is oppressive to women (and children), and it stifles or drains off those communitarian — sororal and fraternal — feelings on which a new society could be built.

9. *What place do you give to the right to abortion on demand among the objectives of women's struggle?*

The legalization of abortion is a reformist demand — like the removal of the stigma on unwed mothers and so-called illegitimate children, and the establishment of free child-care facilities for working mothers — and as such, suspect. History shows that the anger of women, when channelled into pressing reformist demands only, is all too easily defused (as happened to the movement organized around suffrage in England and America once women were finally given the vote after World War I). Such reforms tend to narrow, and then abruptly disperse, militant energies. It also can be argued that they directly bolster the repressive system, by ameliorating some of its hardships. Contrary to what is felt with such passion, particularly in Latin countries, it's more

plausible to suppose that gaining the right to have an abortion — like the right to divorce and to purchase contraceptives legally and cheaply — will help conserve the present system of marriage and the family. In this way, such reforms actually reinforce the power of men, indirectly confirming the licentious sexuality, exploitative of women, that is considered normal in this society.

These reforms do nevertheless correspond to the concrete, immediate needs of hundreds of millions of women — all but the rich and privileged. Ameliorating their condition can, given a proper theoretical consciousness in the woman's movement, lead to other demands. Much of the value of struggling for goals of such limited, questionable political weight depends on where the struggle is taking place. As a rule, the harder the struggle is, the greater is the chance of politicizing it. Thus, to campaign for the legalizing of contraceptives and abortions has a larger political dimension in Italy or Argentina than it does in Norway or Australia. In itself, the right to abortion has no serious political content at all — despite its extreme desirability on humanitarian and ecological grounds. It becomes a valuable demand, however, when taken as a step in a chain of demands, and actions, which can mobilize and move forward the awareness of large numbers of women who have not yet begun to think consciously about their oppression. Nothing in the situation of women will be changed when any one of these rights are won. The fact that divorce is virtually impossible to get in Spain, while it is easy to get in Mexico, does not make the situation of women in Mexico substantially better than it is in Spain. But the struggle for these rights can be an important step in preparing for a more profound level of struggle.

10. *How do you, who are precisely a liberated woman, experience the attitude of men toward you?*

I would never describe myself as a liberated woman. Of course, things are never as simple as *that*. But I have always been a feminist.

When I was five years old, I day-dreamed about becoming a biochemist and winning the Nobel Prize. (I had just read a biography of Madame Curie.) I stuck with chemistry until the age of ten, when I decided I would become a doctor. At fifteen, I knew I was going to be a writer. That is to say: from the beginning it never even occurred to me that I might be prevented from doing things in "the world" because I was born female. Perhaps because I spent most of my sickly childhood reading and in my chemistry laboratory in the empty garage, growing up in a very provincial part of the United States with a family life so minimal that it could be described as subnuclear, I was curiously innocent of the very existence of a barrier. When, at fifteen, I left home

to go to a university, and then took up various careers, the relations that I had with men in my professional life seemed to me, with some exceptions, cordial and untroubled. So I went on not knowing there was a problem. I didn't even know I was a feminist, so unfashionable was that point of view at the time, when I married at the age of seventeen and kept my own name; it seemed to me an equally "personal" act of principle on my part, when I divorced my husband seven years later, to have indignantly rejected my lawyer's automatic bid for alimony, even though I was broke, homeless, and jobless at that moment and I had a six-year-old child to support.

Now and then, people I met would allude to the supposed difficulties of being both independent and a woman; I was always surprised — and sometimes annoyed, because, I thought, they were being obtuse. The problem didn't exist for me — except in the envy and resentment I occasionally felt from other women, the educated, jobless, home stranded wives of the men with whom I worked. I was conscious of being an exception, but it hadn't ever seemed hard to be an exception; and I accepted the advantages I enjoyed as my right. I know better now.

My case is not uncommon. Not so paradoxically, the position of a "liberated" woman in a liberal society where the vast majority of women are *not* liberated can be embarrassingly easy. Granted a good dose of talent and a certain cheerful or merely dogged lack of self-consciousness, one can even escape (as I did) the initial obstacles and derision that are likely to afflict a woman who insists on autonomy. It will not seem so hard for such a woman to lead an independent life; she may even reap some professional advantages from being a woman, such as greater visibility. Her good fortune is like the good fortune of a few blacks in a liberal but still racist society. Every liberal grouping (whether political, professional or artistic) needs its token woman.

What I have learned in the last five years — helped by the women's movement — is to situate my own experience in a certain *political* perspective. My good fortune is really beside the point. What does it prove? Nothing.

Any already "liberated" woman who complacently accepts her privileged situation participates in the oppression of other women. I accuse the overwhelming majority of women with careers in the arts and sciences, in the liberal professions, and in politics of doing just that.

I have often been struck by how misogynistic most successful women are. They are eager to say how silly, boring, superficial, or tiresome they find other women, and how much they prefer the company of men. Like most men, who basically despise and patronize women, most "liberated" women don't like or respect other women. If they don't fear

them as sexual rivals, they fear them as professional rivals — wishing to guard their special status as women admitted into largely all-male professional worlds. Most women who pass as being “liberated” are shameless Uncle Toms, eager to flatter their men colleagues, becoming their accomplices in putting down other, less accomplished women, dishonestly minimizing the difficulties they themselves have run into because of being women. The implication of their behavior is that all women can do what they have done, if only they would exert themselves; that the barriers put up by men are flimsy; that it is mainly women themselves who hold themselves back. This simply is not true.

The first responsibility of a “liberated” woman is to lead the fullest, freest, and most imaginative life she can. The second responsibility is her solidarity with other women. She may live and work and make love with men. But she has no right to represent her situation as simpler, or less suspect, or less full of compromises than it really is. Her good relations with men must not be bought at the price of betraying her sisters.

Barbara Rose

PROTEST IN ART

Puerilism we shall call the attitude of a community whose behaviour is more immature than the state of its intellectual and critical faculties would warrant, which instead of making the boy into the man adapts its conduct to that of the adolescent age. — J. Huizanga, *Salmagundi*, 1972

Because Dada reacted against bourgeois society and its culture in the period just preceding, during, and after World War I, various antiauthoritarian styles of behavior in America in the late fifties and sixties have been variously labeled neo-Dada. Undoubtedly direct connections between happenings, environments, ephemeral art, and the like characteristics of the American avant-garde and Dada manifestations exist. There are, however, crucial dissimilarities, especially with regard to the role of antiauthoritarian behavior as an act of protest.

Recent interest in Dada dates back as far as the publication of Robert Motherwell's anthology *The Dada Painters and Poets* in 1951, which introduced a new generation of American artists including Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Whitman, George Brecht, and Red Grooms to a tradition of antiformalist art. The presence of Marcel Duchamp in New York also provided a continuous bond with the Dada past. Interestingly enough, New York had crystallized as a Dada center before Zurich, Paris, Hannover, or Berlin. One might say Dada — especially the sceptical satiric Dada of Duchamp — came naturally to Americans, who saw themselves not as the heirs of a great cultural tradition but

as the inhabitants of "god's junkyard." In fact the negative assessment of American culture by its own avant-garde has its origin in New York Dada. The critics of the Steiglitz circle who wrote for *Camera Work* and *291*, Picabia's Dada publication, heaped abuse on American philistinism and materialism, and John Sloan suggested that Hieronymous Bosch was the only painter capable of capturing the American scene.

Although the publication of *The Dada Painters and Poets* reintroduced Dada concepts in America, crucial transformations had already taken place in American society which meant that the interest in Dada was not at all in its spirit of protest, but rather in its antiformal aesthetic attitudes. Art historians have taken the purported political content of Dada far too seriously. The Dadaists by self-admission were politically naive; their "political" protests were non-specific. Bourgeois *culture* not capitalist politics was the main target. Dada's strategy was to challenge the bourgeois ideology of progress by rupturing continuity with historical tradition. The art of environments, happenings, and concepts and the ironic use of popular imagery in pop art that flourished in New York around 1960 was tied to Dada in that it also challenged the ivory tower idealism of pure art. But Dada *attacked* — its aggression was turned outward toward the world. It insulted, shocked, subverted, and threw into question the entire apparatus of bourgeois culture. What was called neo-Dada in New York attacked nothing, not even art. Dada techniques and experiments were used only as devices to initiate new forms; Dada, in other words, was appreciated as a purely aesthetic phenomenon, stripped of critical content.

To a degree, the lack of interest in the social protest element of Dada in American neo-Dada had to do with the strength of the identity of the New York School as an independent avant-garde. Dada forms and antiforms were used as a means of reacting against Abstract Expressionism and abstract art generally, but there was no question of protesting politics, economics, ethics, or any other social concerns because the artist stood so firmly *outside* society. During the sixties, however, American society began to take notice of artistic activities, largely as a result of the media obsession with news. And as long as art directed itself toward newness, the media infatuation with novelty assured its intrusion into the American consciousness.

Suddenly the American artist found himself within instead of outside society. This created a bewildering situation. Lacking any previous interaction with that society, these artists had developed no means or tradition of protest: the American avant-garde had never protested because there had been no context within which to protest. The abrasive relationship that had developed between bourgeois society and the avant-garde in Europe simply did not exist. In fact Duchamp had always maintained he lived in America because it was the only place that as an artist he could remain completely anonymous.

Beginning in the sixties the existence of an audience created a whole set of new problems. Even initially, it was obvious that the permissive attitude of this audience was evidence of bad faith. Thus by the time the American avant-garde was forced into direct commerce, so to speak, with an audience that was not itself, the original Dada impulse to *épater le bourgeois* was no longer viable as a strategy of protest. For one thing, the notion of shock is predicated on an idea of what normative behavior might be, and even that standard was lacking in America. Something is shocking only in relation to an accepted system of values. Here a system of decorum had never been firmly enough established to create a code of behavior with regard to which certain kinds of activities could be considered shocking. There was of course one notable exception, and that was the vestiges of sexual prudery left over even as late in 1960 from American puritanism. Whether American art helped inspire the sexual revolution, or whether it simply ran along side it is a difficult question to answer. At any rate, we do see suddenly around 1960 a preponderance of forbidden and taboo themes in American art. Lucas Samaras's plaster dolls (recently seen at the Whitney Museum) miming the positions of the Kama Sutra, George Segal's plaster copulating couple, Ed Kienholz's bordello, Oldenburg's overt sexual imagery, Wesselman's mammary fantasies (with their clear juxtaposition of female genitalia, breasts, and food) generated a certain excitement when they were originally exhibited. Today they seem almost prudish, reticent in comparison with ordinary popular entertainment. Porno movies, massage parlors, topless clubs, and the rest have forced the artists to look for categories other than the erotic for forbidden themes which might challenge conventional norms.

It was only natural in this situation to turn to anti-social Dada behavior in areas beyond the erotic. However, Dada's negation and nihilism were rejected. American artists did not connect with Dada's protest because their view of Dada had been filtered through John Cage, who altered the Dada aesthetic in a number of significant ways. For Cage was influenced not only by Satie, Duchamp, and Dada, but also by the oriental philosophy of Zen. And it was this odd mix of Dada and Zen that Cage handed on to his disciples and followers who were so numerous it is difficult to think of an important artist of the sixties unaffected by his thought. The crucial difference is that where Dada says attack, Zen says accept. It is this oriental passivity we remark among younger Americans that strikes us as so foreign to the aggressive Dada spirit. There was, however, an area in which Zen and Dada coincided. That was in the attitude toward chance, which became an extremely important element for American art in the sixties. But the use of chance itself as a method to form creation implies a large degree of passivity toward the external world.

The irrelevancy of overt protest was accepted by the generation of American artists who grew up in the Eisenhower years, lived through McCarthy, and went to war in Korea. Nor could you scandalize an audience whose public morals became increasingly lax as the decade wore on. You could, however, bore them or irritate them. Cage prescribed both. For a time boredom seemed an effective way to irritate — that is, until the public began enjoying sitting through eight hours of Andy Warhol's *Sleep* and queuing up for marathon viewing of an immobile camera recording the *Empire State Building* lighting up hours of close-ups of people engaged in the most mundane occupations. When boredom ultimately was found to have an aesthetic dimension, another strategy of alienating the audience was exhausted.

Inevitably the nature of the relationship of the avant-garde to its audience defines the types of protest available at any given time. When the audience has become as excessively permissive as the current American audience, there is no longer any act of aggression the artist can direct toward it, since these actions will not be interpreted as aggression but as more diversion. The system of signaling has therefore broken down, largely as a result of the communications revolution which neutralizes information and deprives both art and criticism of a role antagonistic to established culture. Through the media, aggression is transformed into harmless entertainment.

On one level, every stylistic change in the history of art may be viewed as an Oedipal confrontation. However, as the ruptures between generations become greater, and entire systems of values are at variance, the generational confrontation takes on a more and more violent character. All forms of rebellion are revolts against authority; but the degree to which this authority is held to be illegitimate becomes critical. The initial rebellion of the avant-garde in the nineteenth century took place within the context of a specific and generally understood discipline. How much classical academicism reflected the values of an entire social structure, its investment in ideals of hierarchical order, is revealed by the violence with which the questioners of these values were attacked by the public. They were jeered at, mocked, deprived of honors and status, deliberately impoverished, and forced to live as classless bohemians. When we read Manet's and Degas's letters, we realize how ill-prepared the artist was for such rejection, and how much he continued to crave society's acceptance. For no mere stylistic change in the past had ever evoked such hostility from society at large. Therefore something greater than stylistic change must have been at stake in these first manifestations of the modern spirit.

The equation of a disruption of the social order with a disruption of the cultural order was not the intention of the artists who originally caused these disruptions. Once cast out from society, however, they had no choice but to play the role of pariah which society had assigned them. Yet they never ceased suffering from rejection, for their goals were highly idealistic. It is at this stage of rejection, for example, that we get figures like Van Gogh and Gauguin, tortured by guilt because of the discrepancy between the idealism of their intentions and the reception of their art by society.

Van Gogh's career as a missionary and evangelist testifies to the extreme idealism of his personality; as does Gauguin's religious iconography. Yet both ended as martyrs — Van Gogh a suicide, Gauguin an exile. Both were haunted by masochistic guilt feelings expressing the conflict between their own conception of the good and society's values. Gauguin's self-portrait in the National Gallery in Washington, for example, illustrates this conflict, for he shows himself with both angelic and diabolic attributes — a celestial halo as well as the devil's pronged tail.

The artist's self-identification with martyrs provides a fascinating art historical category. At first he paints himself as martyred religious figures — Dürer sees himself as Christ, Rembrandt as the apostle Paul. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, however, the theme of the artist as society's martyr goes beyond his identification with religious figures or saviors. In one of his best known essays, the playwright, poet, and essayist Artaud writes of Van Gogh as "the man suicided by society." Society's rejection of the artist forces him to accept the role of martyr as opposed to his intended role of savior. A work by Claes Oldenburg illustrates the contemporary artist's feeling that the public is eating him alive: it is a jello mold in the image of the artist. Andy Warhol finally attracted so much violence to himself that it was inevitable that he should be shot — martyred by a society that literally endangers any artists that dares come into direct contact with its chaos.

By the late sixties, the artist's feelings of rejection, self-hatred, and guilt have crystallized to new dimensions in a form called Body Art. The success of Body Art depends on the degree to which the artist can mutilate his own body. We have had many recent examples, all exhibited in galleries and museums to a public no longer shocked but titillated into a sadomasochistic identification with the act of self-mutilation. One may cite as examples Dennis Oppenheim methodically ripping off a toenail, Vito Accouni rubbing cockroaches out into his bare chest, and Chris Burden's suspending himself between buckets of water and live electric currents which presumably would electrocute him if one of the buckets were tipped over.

The *ne plus ultra* of Body Art, however, was the self-castration of Rudolph Schwarzkogler, a German artist who cut off slices of his penis until he finally bled to death. The photographs recording this process were exhibited at Documenta 5 last summer in Kassel, West Germany. The examples of self-mutilation and masochistic practices among artists today are so numerous that it becomes simply repetitious to catalogue them. What is significant is that protest is no longer directed outward as an aggression toward society — as in Dada — but turned in against the self. As the potential for protest is gradually eradicated by the ability of technological culture to coopt any form of criticism toward its own ends, the artist turns against himself.

Although conceptual art presumably sought to destroy the status of the art object as a medium of exchange, its strategies too

were proved pointless as the artists began exhibiting "documents" — photographs, videotapes, prints, etc., of their works in commercial galleries and museums. The permissiveness of dealers, curators, and the public seemingly had no end. Dada's testing of limits was demonstrated as ridiculous in the present context, which admits of no limits. The result is that in its current confusion, society has abdicated the parental authoritarian rule vis-à-vis the rebellious artist adopted in the formative years of the avant-garde. In other words, society in general no longer wishes to perpetuate the traditional relationship between itself and the avant-garde: the society appropriates to itself the artist's license to remain a child, perpetually at play, knowing no limits.

Dada exalted play as a form of artistic activity: now Dada has become the activity of the masses reflected in its films and rock concerts. And conversely, the artist can no longer practice Dada if he wishes to remain in a critical role. This has produced an enormous crisis, polarizing artistic protest into forms on the one hand more infantile and, on the other, more mature than those of Dada, whose adolescent attitudes no longer seem opposite to the current situation.

For the key to Dada from a psychological point of view is to understand how closely its interests and activities conform to those of the adolescent. In *En Avant Dada*, the Dadaist Richard Hülsenbeck speaks of "The New Man — armed with the Weapons of Doubt and Defiance." To speak of the "new man," and call doubt and defiance weapons, is to speak in a sense as an adolescent, who doubts and defies the old order, envisioning himself as the new man who will replace his father, the old man. The adolescent sees that the old generation with its dead values, hypocrisy, and corruption must be replaced with new values. He is optimistic; he has hopes that he can transform the world. Current despair, on the other hand, is predicated on the understanding that society will no longer assume its traditional role of parental opposition. In this case, the hope of transforming the world — making it new again dwindles with each manifestation of permissiveness — the signal that the parent does not care.

Dada seems to us now a delightful episode, its despair a combination of adolescent *weltschmerz* and romantic self-pity, in contrast to the present moment of harsh truths and dead-ends. Adolescence is the period of preparing for something else, preparing for a future

without precisely knowing what the future might be. It is a period of testing, experimentation. Above all, it is a period of fantasies. "For a while," Hülsebeck reminisced, "my dream had been to make literature with a gun in my pocket." The gun, however, the means to true revolution, remains safely in his pocket. Rebellion is fantasy, a dream of revolution.

For the Dadaists, the revolution is made only in art, that is, only in fantasy. Politics for the Dadaists was merely an aspect of the old order, not its essence. It was still presumed that the cultural revolution could proceed without or, in more elaborately constructed fantasies, in advance of, the political revolution. Today no artist can make any move without entertaining the public; no stance is sufficiently alienating not to be retrieved for the purpose of diversion. The Dadaists lived in a more innocent time when they might scandalize others by entertaining only themselves. How much their performances, manifestations, and theater events resemble traditional adolescent revues—even in terms of structure, acts and vaudeville overtones—has not been noticed. Although the programs at the Cabaret Voltaire may have been a bit more daring than those at the Princeton Triangle Club or Harvard's Hasty Pudding, the impulse to get together and perform for friends and the initiated, to satirize the inanity of the older generation, in a gathering of peers sharing a common language often unintelligible to the elders being ridiculed is a feature common to all types of adolescent theater.

In discussing Dada psychology, I do not use the term adolescent in a pejorative but in a descriptive sense to distinguish Dada modes of rebellion from current forms of antiauthoritarian behavior. The Dada artist had the good fortune to be permitted to act as an adolescent with regard to his relationship to a society that still conceived of itself as paternalistic and authoritarian, a society in which there were still boundaries and standards of behavior. In such a society, the hope of growing up, of finally replacing the old order, was not yet dead. In the face of so many additional defeats of the idealistic utopian spirit subsequent to Dada, that hope is all but extinguished in the current generation of artists. Present forms of antiauthoritarian behavior can no longer conform to the model of adolescence, nor even in most instances to any classical generational conflicts, which presuppose the possibility of vanquishing the father.

"Dada holds war and peace in its toga but prefers to have a cherry brandy flip," Hülsebeck wrote in a passage that perfectly evokes the fashionable nihilism of the twenties. Even pop art had a little of the fun-loving aspect of Dada. But the irony had grown cold, cruel, and finally vicious by the time today's super-realists began to paint the horrors of the American tinsel and neon nightmare in photographic *trompe l'oeil*. The shopping centers and luncheonettes are vacant, devoid of any human presence. The motorcycles gleam with vicious coldness, the precise mechanical style in which they are painted an analogue of total depersonalization. There is no more mocking irony, only cynical passive acceptance. There are no expressionist distortions to spell out a point of view; the artist is reduced to mute witnessing of a horror that is the more nightmarish for its reality.

The attitude is not of protest but of infantile passivity, and even those acts of protest which continue are couched in infantile terms. Thus the late Italian neo-Dadaist Manzoni exhibits his own canned feces in the gallery. Blood and filth are smeared over performers in ritualistic happenings. Galleries are filled with heaps of junk, garbage, and dirt as the artist resorts to more and more infantile strategies to attract the attention of the unloving uninterested parent. Infantile feelings of omnipotence are expressed in earth works — grandiose projects to change the world — giant sandpiles financed by a bored public. Eventually every kind of pathology is hailed as art: Exhibitionism (Vito Acconci masturbating in public); Autism (the "living sculpture" of Gilbert and George impersonating singing automata); Narcissism (Lucas Samaras using double exposure Polaroids to create the image of sodomizing himself); Necrophilia (Paul Thek's life-size replica of himself entombed); all are common fare. Alienation becomes a favored subject. The body itself is conceived of as a foreign object. Bruce Nauman paints his testicles black and Wolfgang Stoerkle animates his penis in rhythmic patterns on videotape. Images of castration and dismemberment are everywhere, from Jim Dine's headless bathrobes (one with ax attached) to Jasper Johns's scattered parts of the human anatomy to Robert Morris's brain covered with dollar bills to Ed Kienholz's recent tableau *5 Car Stud*, depicting castration of a black by four whites. The Images of masochism, self-mutilation,

and self-destruction multiply, as the artist, deprived of his capacity to protest, or sensing the inadequacy of protest, turns against himself.

Part of the artist's sense of impotence derives from his recognition that society affords him no possibilities for responsible action. All decisions regarding the artist's life and work are made by others — bureaucrats, government functionaries, trustees, dealers, collectors, institutions, etc. Artists are rarely if ever consulted in a decision-making capacity because society sees them as irresponsible infants — whose antics are considered cute or bad, depending on how much mess they make. Given this situation, the type of personality who chooses to be an artist at this juncture in history is frequently dysfunctional to the point of pathology, infantile and desperate.

Do we need any more proof that this society does not take art seriously? It exalts creativity in official rhetoric, sets up funds and council and endowments in which the artist is not permitted a decision-making role. The artist realizes he is no longer even an ornament, but an expendable entertainer. Within such a context, the Dada attitude has no place. The freedom to experiment coupled with the sense, characteristic of adolescence, of looking forward to a new world is not a possible option. The present situation permits only passive infantilism, or as a more difficult alternative, a higher state of consciousness and a more developed sense of responsibility. But moral responsibility cannot express itself in art, but only in the artist's conduct. Artists for example were among the first openly to oppose the war. In 1966 a peace tower was built in Los Angeles by Mark di Suvero; works were donated by many leading artists to raise funds for the peace movement. Irving Petlin was injured defending the tower. As a protest against the war, di Suvero left this country and works in Europe. In 1970 artists organized the Art Strike and refused to associate themselves with official exhibitions of the government. A group of artists formed an Emergency Cultural Government and went to Washington to speak with government leaders. They were told that since they were artists no one would take them seriously; but if they had been doctors their plea might have been heard.

One cannot speak of artists like Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg as protesting in Dada terms. However, they are effective mirrors of the role and function we have assigned art. Warhol presents himself as an art-making machine, a prostitute to the capitalist system

of profit-taking. Oldenburg mocks the absurdity of inflated official rhetoric with his grandiose forms. His art resembles giant toys — a constant reminder of the infantilism of the society in which the artist is forced to function. The ineffectuality of protest today creates a more profound crisis than that experienced prior to the present.

Conceptual art aims to deprive the public of art as commodity. Depriving the parent of the desired object is the typical infantile strategy; and the infantilism of conceptual art should be evident. It is also a strategy doomed to failure, because it presumes that society is still acting *in loco parentis* with regard to its wayward artists: that it in fact feels the absence of the art object as a deprivation. Yet there is no evidence to cause us to believe art is missed: what is missed is the amusement provided by art.

We are confronted now with artistic attitudes formulated not in terms of the disgust of Brecht, but the disgust of Beckett. In the world of Dada and Brecht, the world is garbage. But garbage for an artist like Schwitters is imbued with charming nostalgia — the past is in pieces, but nevertheless we may still reconstruct the fragments. In the world of Beckett, the garbage cans of *Endgame* are filled not with the Merz scraps of dead civilizations, but with empty human beings. Humanity, not merely its cultural artifacts, has become garbage. This is the deepest pessimism, an eschatological view no longer relieved by the possibilities of millenarian fantasies of redemption. In these circumstances art is conceived not as a form of protest, but as a form of pathology.

In this case, the emphasis on the play element, on the ephemeral as opposed to the experimental, leads to a redefinition of art not as a specific kind of object but as non-goal-oriented behavior. In these terms, art is no longer involved with any fixed objective, but with acting out various antiauthoritarian strategies. New categories of the forbidden must be located, not in protest against institutions or value systems, but in terms of overtly pathological behavior. The following description of a performance of the Viennese artist Hermann Nitch's Orgies-Mysteries Theatre at The Kitchen last December advertises the worth of Mr. Nitch's work on the basis that "his abreaction theatre was cause for trial and prison sentences for offending the public and for blasphemy." Mr. Nitch, according to his publicist, "is working with very essential materials, like flesh, and blood and brains.

In his theatre he wants to sublimate the excessive, sado-masochistic 'abreaction' (dilacerating of meat, disembowlement of slaughtered animals, trampling on the entrails). . . . The means of this theatre to achieve its goal are the sado-masochistic dispute with meat and 'abre-active' events which lead to a cathartic climax."

Such a description indicates that increasing permissiveness has created a state of desperation in the minds of artists whose principal tactic for engagement has been shock. Moreover, when all activities — war, art, and human relations included — begin to be interpreted as games, as forms of behavior not tied to value systems, pathological activity more obviously attracts attention. One of the most alarming aspects of neo-Dada theory is its embrace of the play ethic, if one may use this for a call to destroy art-life boundaries, which is implied in the view that all events are theater and all art is an extension of the real world to the exclusion of boundaries previously separating the two. In the essay on "Puerlism" quoted, J. Huizinga the Dutch historian noted for his study of play (*Homo Ludens*), comments: "The most fundamental characteristic of true play, whether it be a cult, a performance, a contest or a festivity, is that at a certain moment it is *over*. The spectators go home, the players take off their masks, the performance has ended. And here the evil of our time shows itself. For nowadays play in many cases never ends and hence is not true play. A far-reaching contamination of play and serious activity has taken place. The two spheres are getting mixed." Here exactly is the danger of a kind of moral confusion beyond any aesthetic confusions that current strategies of antiauthoritarian behavior imply.

Jules Feiffer

COHN OF ARC

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

ABE

COHN

WISEMAN

JOAN

FIRST VOICE

SECOND VOICE

ACT I

Scene 1

The time is the present. A small log house in the woods. It is unpainted, cramped, containing the worldly goods of two lifetimes, COHN'S and ABE'S. Books and periodicals litter every surface, including the floor, which is covered with an old Persian rug. Two out-of-use TVs, circa 1950. An aged radio-phonograph console, next to it on the floor a stack of classical LPs. A large oak table that serves as a dining table and ABE'S desk. A typewriter, holding a blank sheet of paper at ABE'S end of the table; next to it a ream of blank paper. The kitchen is separated from the living-dining room by a tattered screen, covered with magazine cut-outs of famous faces: Einstein, Tolstoy, Beethoven, Toscanini, F.D.R., Gandhi, Joe Louis, Babe Ruth, Katherine Cornell. . . . The kitchen is well equipped: a huge iron range, shelves of spices, canned goods, other supplies, a shelf of cook books. Two burlap-curtained doorways lead to the bedrooms. A tiny windowed door leads outside. The view through two

dark windows is of vegetation: crawling vines, blackened leaves. Pictures bury the walls: simply framed, very small, mostly family photographs and postcard-size reproductions of impressionist paintings. In one corner: a large steamer trunk. Somewhere close to the kitchen: an open ironing board; on it a graying bundle of shirts, living there for days. On a side table: COHN's violin, near it, a music stand. In addition to the two dining-room chairs there is an old rocker, COHN's, and a huge, beat-up, overstuffed armchair, ABE's. At rise: COHN, overweight and fifty, is at the stove, reading from a cookbook and mixing ingredients into a pot. He is humming a Mozart aria. He hums, cooks, tastes. Across the room, ABE, underweight and fifty, lies in his chair, staring into space. He lights a cigar and meditates.

ABE: It's getting better.

COHN: (*tastes*) Who says?

ABE: I say.

COHN: (*mixes*) With what evidence?

ABE: My eyes are my evidence.

COHN: (*turns to ABE and raises two fingers*) How many fingers?

ABE: Five.

COHN: Some eyes. (*goes back to his cooking*) You're blind.

ABE: All right, two.

COHN: (*slams down the pot and turns to ABE*) So if you can see two, why do you say five?

ABE: I prefer five.

COHN: That's not a reason.

ABE: Why does there always have to be a reason?

COHN: Abe, I've known you for twenty-five years and for you there's never a reason.

ABE: And you? You're better off.

COHN: I don't invent.

ABE: I beg your pardon. Neither do I.

COHN: What kind of fool am I living with? You just made up five.

ABE: I didn't make it up.

COHN: Not a minute ago.

ABE: No.

COHN: I was holding up two (*holds up two fingers*) and you said I was holding up five! (*holds up five fingers*)

ABE: You *are* holding up five. (COHN *quickly puts down his hand*)

COHN: What's the use!

ABE: Cohn, I'll tell you something — you're rigid. I'm flexible.

COHN: Mindless.

ABE: You only believe in what's in front of your nose. That's not mindless?

COHN: I don't make things up.

ABE: (*points to curtained doorway*) What's that?

COHN: Don't bother me. (ABE *continues to point*) It's my bedroom! (*goes back to his cooking*) Pest!

ABE: I don't see any bedroom.

COHN: You know it's my bedroom!

ABE: I beg your pardon. All I see is a curtain. (COHN *goes and pulls back the curtain*) Ah hah! A bedroom! (ABE *rises, crosses to the doorway and pulls the curtain back into place*) A curtain. (*pulls the curtain back and forth*) A bedroom. A curtain. A bedroom. A curtain. A bedroom. Is it still a bedroom when you don't see it?

COHN: It's always a bedroom!

ABE: So for you it's always a bedroom and for me it's always five fingers. (COHN *slams the plate down on the table, pours stew into it and begins to eat. ABE joins him at the table, studies the blank sheet in his typewriter, punches one key and nods seriously at the results.*) I'm right so I don't get any stew?

COHN: You want stew? Here! (*hands him pot*)

ABE: (*looks into pot*) It's empty.

COHN: (*points to empty pot*) What's that?

ABE: A pot.

COHN: You saw me cook stew in it? (ABE *nods*) You saw me pour stew out of it? (ABE *nods*) So eat your stew. (ABE, *unhappily, watches COHN eat. COHN wipes his mouth and points to the empty space in front of ABE.*) Eat! That's steak. That's potatoes. That's salad. That's beer. Hearty appetite!

ABE: That's vicious.

COHN: (*smiles, self-satisfied*) Abe, you can pull the wool over your eyes but you can't pull it over mine. I know you every step of the way. I know you inside and out.

ABE: I'm hungry.

COHN: So make something.

ABE: You know I don't cook. I burn everything.

COHN: Don't.

ABE: My mind wanders. (COHN gets up, crosses to stock shelf, takes down a box of spaghetti, sets a plate in front of ABE and pours the uncooked spaghetti onto the plate.) It's not cooked.

COHN: I say it's cooked. Two fingers. Five fingers. Eat your spaghetti. (ABE looks disconsolately at the plate, picks the spaghetti sticks up in his hand and begins to eat them. COHN watches for a moment, then relents. He takes the plate away from ABE and pours the spaghetti into a pot of water on the stove.) When will you learn?

ABE: To be like you? I beg your pardon, is that such a blessing?

COHN: Don't get personal.

ABE: I don't like being made a fool of.

COHN: You asked for it.

ABE: I know I'm right. (COHN groans) You can win the argument but it doesn't mean you're right. Inside I know who's right.

COHN: You think so?

ABE: I know so. With my ex-wife, I also lost all arguments. But you told me I was right.

COHN: With her you *were* right.

ABE: So if I lost with her and was right, you have to admit that when I lose with you I also could be right. It's consistent.

COHN: Abe, I'm going to tell you a little story. A parable. After I finish you tell me what it means to you. OK?

ABE: Before I eat?

COHN: Here. (*cuts him a slice of cheese, ABE wolfs it down.*) Once there was this beautiful, innocent, young maid, golden locks, of eighteen who lived in a dark forest in the country with her very proud, strict parents and it was her habit to sit by a pond day in and day out and moon and mope about the moment when love would first enter her life. One day this lovely young thing is daydreaming by the pond when a frog hops out of the water and into her lap. The beautiful maid recoils. "Don't be frightened!" croaks the ugly little frog. "I am not what I appear to be. I am in truth a handsome young Prince cast under a spell by a wicked witch and this spell can only be broken when some fair maid takes me into her bed and spends the night by my side." So the girl calmed down and decided

why not? So she brought the frog home and she took it to bed with her and the next morning she woke up — and lying next to her was this tall, handsome, naked young Prince. And that's the way she explained it to her parents when they walked in on the two of them. What's the moral of the story?

ABE: The moral is you're a very cynical man.

COHN: You want dinner? Then discuss it intelligently.

ABE: (*leaves the table and returns to his own chair*) The moral is you take a classic fable with charm and beauty that deals with dreams and imagination and you change it into men's room humor. That's the moral. What you reveal of yourself. (*leaves his chair, crosses to the typewriter, punches a key, and sits back down again*)

COHN: You would believe the girl's story?

ABE: I beg your pardon, I wouldn't be her prosecutor. I leave that to you.

COHN: Supposing you're the girl's father?

ABE: I would face the problem with compassion.

COHN: First admitting it's a problem!

ABE: A man in bed with my daughter? At first — until the situation's cleared up, I have to admit it's a problem.

COHN: Then she tells you the story of the frog.

ABE: Which clears up everything.

COHN: You believe about the frog?

ABE: What's important is she believes about the frog. We didn't bring her up to lie.

COHN: You'd rather have her crazy than lie.

ABE: Why is that crazy?

COHN: Or hallucinating.

ABE: Because her mind can conjure with change — with ugliness turning into beauty — you call that hallucinating? And what *you* see — only beauty turning into ugliness — you call that reality? I beg your pardon, Cohn, you're living in a stacked deck. You give me a choice, I prefer frogs into Princes over Princes into frogs.

COHN: Even if it's not so.

ABE: How do we know? All I'm saying is we don't know.

COHN: Do we know that you're Abe and I'm Cohn?

ABE: In this life.

COHN: In this life. But in another life maybe I was Abe and you were Cohn.

ABE: It's possible. Anything's possible.

COHN: Or that I was Mozart and you were Thomas Jefferson?

ABE: It's unlikely. But it's possible.

COHN: Or that I was Moses and you were Christ.

ABE: It's possible.

COHN: Abe, I'm going to give you a chance to listen to what you just said: It's possible you were Christ.

ABE: I didn't say probable. I said possible.

COHN: And it's possible that if I rub this lamp a genie will come out?

ABE: All I'm saying is we don't know, do we? (COHN rubs the lamp)

COHN: Now we know.

ABE: I beg your pardon, we know about one lamp. We don't know about all lamps. Also we don't know that a genie *didn't* come out. We don't know that there isn't a genie in this room this very moment. And that he isn't saying "Master, I am the genie of the lamp and I have three wishes to grant you and anything you wish will come true." Maybe he's there and maybe we've been taught how not to see genies in our time. Or hear them. Or take advantage when they offer us three wishes. That's all I'm saying. That it could be us, not him.

COHN: Who?

ABE: The genie.

COHN: Abe, if I had three wishes you know what would be my first wish? That instead of you to talk to, to drive me crazy for another twenty years, I had somebody with a brain I could talk to! That's what I wish! (*A sudden explosion engulfs ABE. The smoke clears and sitting in his place is a bearded wiseman in robes. He holds a clipboard and a pen.*)

WISEMAN: Name?!

COHN: (*shaken*) Cohn.

WISEMAN: (*checks the clipboard*) That's right — Cohn. Occupation?!

COHN: Musician.

WISEMAN: (*smiles*) Musician. Where are you a musician, Cohn?

COHN: At the present I am unemployed.

WISEMAN: (*smiles*) at the present you are unemployed, is that right, Cohn?

COHN: Yes.

WISEMAN: At the present — let me see if I have this straight — you are an unemployed musician.

COHN: That's right.

WISEMAN: Unemployed. But still a musician.

COHN: Yes.

WISEMAN: What are you first, Cohn? A musician or an unemployed?

COHN: I don't understand the question.

WISEMAN: You wanted someone intelligent to talk to?

COHN: Yes.

WISEMAN: Meaning that he will be on your level. That's what you mean by intelligent, isn't it, Cohn? (*waits*) Well? Isn't it?

COHN: I guess it is.

WISEMAN: By that we are to assume that you consider yourself intelligent. Or do I go too far, Cohn?

COHN: No.

WISEMAN: No what?

COHN: What you said.

WISEMAN: That I go too far?

COHN: (*inaudible*) No.

WISEMAN: I can't hear you.

COHN: The other — what else you said first.

WISEMAN: That you consider yourself — don't let me put words in your mouth — intelligent. Though unemployed, out of work, a ward of the state, you consider yourself intelligent. And that you want as a companion — am I right in this? — someone of equal intelligence.

COHN: —

WISEMAN: I am not putting words in your mouth?

COHN: No. Equal intelligence. That's it.

WISEMAN: You want another unemployed musician?

COHN: Look — what's happened to Abe?

WISEMAN: Who?

COHN: Abe — my friend.

WISEMAN: You want Abe?

COHN: I want to know where he went.

WISEMAN: You miss this Abe? This friend. This Abe. Is he another unemployed musician?

COHN: A stockbroker. Mutual funds. Retired.

WISEMAN: A wealthy retired stockbroker.

COHN: Yes.

WISEMAN: Supporting you?

COHN: He was sitting in that chair.

WISEMAN: In my chair?

COHN: It's Abe's chair.

WISEMAN: It's Wiseman's chair.

COHN: Who?

WISEMAN: Myself. Helmut Wiseman. It is my chair. You see? I am sitting in it. See how I sit in it, relax in it, lean back in it? So who's chair would you say this is? Does it look as if I've ever been out of this chair? Conversely, does it not look as if I have always been in this chair? How tall is this Abe?

COHN: Five-foot eight.

WISEMAN: He is too short for this chair. You either have the wrong man or the wrong chair. Or the wrong height. If you had another height you might have the right man. But it would still be the wrong chair. No, I'm sorry, I can't help you. This is my chair. I, Wiseman. Mine. I know — you must have the wrong house! Try next door.

COHN: This is my house.

WISEMAN: (*He refers to his clipboard*) Whose?

COHN: (*quickly*) Abe's. Abe and I live here.

WISEMAN: In this house?

COHN: Yes!

WISEMAN: Or a house very much like this?

COHN: It's *this* house!

WISEMAN: Does it have a chair in it very much like this?

COHN: Yes! That's the chair! It has that exact chair!

WISEMAN: What a remarkable coincidence. Is it close by?

COHN: What?

WISEMAN: The house. Please, Cohn. Do pay attention.

COHN: It's here. This! This! This!

WISEMAN: It can't be this house because it's not the right chair.

COHN: It *is* the right chair!

WISEMAN: Then why isn't Abe sitting here? You see, Cohn, your argument collapses of its own weight. I'm sorry, I would like to spend more time with you but there are others waiting. Will you send in the next applicant please?

COHN: What?

WISEMAN: (*points to door*) On your way out will you send in the next applicant? (*a knock on the door*) You see, they are getting impatient.

COHN: This is *my* house!

WISEMAN: Your house? Well, I like that! Now you see here, Mr. Wiseman —

COHN: You're *Wiseman*!

WISEMAN: (*indignant*) Oh! And I suppose I'm Cohn!

COHN: *I'm* Cohn!

WISEMAN: Now *you're* Cohn. It's your chair, your house, and your Cohn. Then who am I, may I ask?

COHN: I don't know who you are! You barge in here —

WISEMAN: Barge in? Did you see me barge in?

COHN: In a manner of speaking.

WISEMAN: No, I'm sorry, Mr. Wiseman or whatever you call yourself, I don't at all care for your manner of speaking. Your manner of speaking is offensive to me. Now if you had a nicer manner of speaking, something like: (*sweet voiced*) "Hello, How are you? I like you. Will you be my friend?" Well, that would be another manner entirely. But the way things stand now, the position is already filled. (*knock on door*) And tell the others to come back tomorrow. I'm going to bed. (*WISEMAN rises and disappears behind the curtained doorway leading into COHN's bedroom.*) —A terrible day. I want to leave a call for seven. (*COHN crosses to the doorway*) If you don't have seven in stock, make it nine. (*another knock, COHN turns to the door.*)

COHN: Who — who's there?

JOAN: Joan.

COHN: Joan who?

JOAN: (*sings*) Joan no why there's no sun up in the sky, stormy weather. (*COHN growls and grabs the kitchen knife off the table*)

COHN: Enough's enough! (*to JOAN*) Did you hear? Enough is enough!

WISEMAN: Will you kids quiet it down in there?

COHN: (*whirls toward bedroom*) Wiseman!! (*advances on bedroom with knife*) I warn you I'm armed!! (*He disappears behind the curtain. Sounds of a fight. Violent curtain moves. After a moment WISEMAN skips out, opens the refrigerator, takes out a carrot, and skips back. Throughout WISEMAN'S exit and return, the sound of the fight and the bustling of the curtain continue. A moment later, COHN crawls out of the bedroom, his clothes in tatters. He throws open the trunk in the corner and pulls out a shotgun. He crawls back inside with the shotgun. A loud blast. COHN staggers out, dragging the dead WISEMAN. A door knock. COHN freezes, holding WISEMAN.*) Who's there?

JOAN: Joan.

COHN: Joan who?

JOAN: Joan ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies. (*COHN drags WISEMAN over to the trunk and with great difficulty manages to squeeze him into it. But not all of him. He pushes down on the head and the legs pop out. He sticks the legs back in and the head and shoulders slide up. This goes on for a while until finally all of WISEMAN is in the trunk and COHN slams shut the lid, at which point the side collapses and WISEMAN'S legs pop out. COHN stares sullenly at WISEMAN'S exposed legs. Another knock.*)

COHN: (*wearily*) Joan who?

JOAN: (*sings*) Joan sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me.

COHN: I thought so. (*He folds back the edge of the rug, slides the trunk next to it, then unfolds the rug over WISEMAN'S legs. He skulks back into the bedroom and comes out with the shotgun. He crosses to the door and listens.*)

JOAN: He won't let me in.

FIRST VOICE: He has to!

SECOND VOICE: Did you tell him who you are?

JOAN: No.

FIRST VOICE: Tell him.

JOAN: I can't.

SECOND VOICE: Why not?

JOAN: It sounds like name-dropping.

FIRST VOICE: Maybe he hasn't heard of you.

JOAN: He must have heard of me.

SECOND VOICE: How do you know if you don't tell him? (*pause*)

JOAN: Knock, Knock.

COHN: (*reloads shotgun*) Who's there?

JOAN: Joan.

COHN: (*getting ready*) Joan who?

JOAN: Joan of Arc. (COHN *whips open the door and blasts away. A loud clang. COHN recoils in horror, drops the gun and backs off. In walks a vision of loveliness wearing a suit of armor. The breast-plate has a big black dent in it. JOAN glares at COHN, crosses herself, and starts talking to her body.*) Are you all right?

FIRST VOICE: I'm all right — a little shaky.

SECOND VOICE: I'm upset but I'm all right.

COHN: (*gasping*) Who are you?

FIRST VOICE: That's some greeting.

SECOND VOICE: You got any more surprises like that?

COHN: Who are they?

JOAN: (*taps the dent in her armor*) My voices. (COHN *retreats to the curtained doorway, turns quickly, and throws the shotgun into the bedroom, then turns back to JOAN.*)

COHN: I'm not a violent man — (*a loud blast from the bedroom. COHN ducks his head behind the curtain and out again.*) No harm done. Has this been a day!

FIRST VOICE: He's a pacifist.

SECOND VOICE: I'd like to pacifist *him* right in the mouth.

COHN: Look — (*slowly regaining confidence through the sound of his own voice*) a man knows himself by what he knows. You look like a compassionate woman; I'll make myself clear. We're born, we're educated, we live, suffer, gain experience, and certain things we learn. We learn that maturity is the weaning out of synthetics in one's life, wherein a man arrives at a sober, uncompromised definition of himself, by himself and for himself so that where, heretofore, one's life was a will-o'-the-wisp fantasy-laden, hodge-podge, it now develops into a spare, clear-eyed, precise, concise, essentially organic whole. Ask questions. I'm not a pedant.

JOAN: You think life is a hole.

COHN: I didn't say it was a hole. An organic whole. (*indicates with motion of his hands*)

JOAN: Life is holy. Not a hole. Small wonder you go around shooting people. You don't know what's important.

COHN: I don't shoot people!

JOAN: In any case life isn't a hole!

FIRST VOICE: You want to know where the hole is?

SECOND VOICE: In your head!

COHN: Look — (*a long exasperated pause*) Who are they?

JOAN: My voices? (*Cohn nods*) They're my voices.

COHN: (*restraining himself*) What have you got inside there? A tape recorder?

JOAN: (*crosses herself*) You pitiful man. (*places a hand on his shoulder*) We must be on our way. Are these rags all you own?

COHN: I don't leave here.

JOAN: But you must come with me —

COHN: No!

JOAN: To see the Emperor!

COHN: Emperor — (*quickly back-pedals, and bangs into the trunk. WISEMAN'S legs kick up in the air under the rug.*) I'll make a contribution — (*reaches into his pocket*)

JOAN: I want you!

COHN: I live here. I stay here. Take the trunk! It's a gift!

JOAN: My mission is to bring you, among others, before the Emperor. It is your duty to follow me.

COHN: (*retreats behind curtain*) I never leave here. Ask anyone. They never see me leave here. They don't know me. Ask anyone if they know me. They'll say "Who?"

JOAN: You must do as I say!

COHN: I have to go with you to see the Emperor. What Emperor? What for? To tell him the sky is falling?

JOAN: The sky is not falling.

COHN: (*sarcastic*) Thank God!

JOAN: It is missing.

COHN: (*comes out from behind curtain with change of clothes*) What's missing?

JOAN: The sky is missing! We must find the Emperor to give him the wonderful news that the sky is missing and that mankind's path to heaven is at last unblocked and unimpeded, and that God calls on His Highness, the Emperor, to build a thousand spaceships and put on them two of every kind and blast off for heaven. Before the holocaust.

COHN: (*sits her down*) OK. (*pause*) Let's take this a little bit at a time. First of all, there's an Emperor, right? (JOAN *nods*) And he lives — where *does* he live? (JOAN *points*) He lives that way. (JOAN *nods*) And you are heading a delegation of citizens to petition the Emperor to build a spaceship —

JOAN: A thousand spaceships!

COHN: To take us to heaven. You said heaven, am I right? (JOAN *nods*) Because the sky which has always been up there is not up there anymore. (JOAN *nods*) In fact, it is missing. And we are to bring this piece of news to the Emperor, this man you call the Emperor. And he is to put two of every kind on spaceships — and thus save us from the holocaust. (JOAN *nods*) And everybody else dies. We're saved. Everybody else dies. Is that a mission or is that a mission!

JOAN: Don't be dense; it has nothing to do with dying. It's more or less like moving. Some people live in the city and some people live in the suburbs and some people live in the country and some people live in heaven.

COHN: You don't have to die to go to heaven anymore?

JOAN: Not since the sky is missing. You simply *move* there. But first, of course, you have to know it's there. For example, if your entire life were spent in the city would you know about cows and trees? No! Well, it's no different with heaven. True, we may know about it in a *religious* sense, but certainly not as a place to migrate.

COHN: (*with infinite patience*) But isn't it cruel — maybe cruel is too strong a word — isn't it thoughtless to abandon everyone else to the holocaust?

JOAN: (*brightly*) I'm glad you asked me that question. I, too, thought it was cruel but my voices tell me that people will never know it's a holocaust. They'll adapt themselves. Many may even find happiness. (*goes to door*) Are you ready?

COHN: Young lady, sit down. I have some shocking news to break to you. (*He sits JOAN back down in a chair*) There is no Emperor.

JOAN: You might as well say there is no God.

COHN: There is no God.

JOAN: You might as well say there is no me and there is no you.

COHN: There is a me; that's all I concede.

JOAN: But there is no me?

COHN: For your information, you are not Joan of Arc.

JOAN: And my voices?

COHN: There are no voices.

FIRST VOICE: There are too!

COHN: There are not!

SECOND VOICE: Are too! Are too!

COHN: Are not! Are not!

FIRST AND SECOND VOICES: Are! Are! Are!

COHN: Not! Not! Not!

JOAN: Then whom are you arguing with?

COHN: (*calms down*) It's not an argument, just a discussion. I wish you'd tell me how you do that.

JOAN: Have you never believed in anything?

COHN: I believe in me. After that there's room for doubt.

JOAN: But it's so lonely!

COHN: That's my problem.

JOAN: How can you bear it?

COHN: If you're strong, you can bear what's true. If you're weak, you make up fairy tales.

JOAN: You think I make up fairy tales?

COHN: I'm not singling you out. Abe, my best friend. Him also. *He'd* go with you to see the Emperor. Not that he'd believe. He wouldn't believe. But just in case. With Abe it's always just in case. He's built an ethic out of "maybe," "who's to know," "just in case." (*in a rage*) He has no convictions! *No convictions!* I much prefer someone crazy like you who thinks she's Joan of Arc. That at least is a position. So that's another reason. I have to stay in the house to take care of Abe; I can't go with you to see the Emperor.

JOAN: We'll take him with us!

COHN: He's not here.

JOAN: Where is he?

COHN: That's the question. Vanished! Vanished to annoy me. You watch, I'll pay him back good. We had an argument — I won't bore you with the details — but it got around — who knows how? — to wishes. Two grown men, an argument over wishes. Abe said it's possible I had three, I said baloney. Abe said I couldn't know unless I wished, so I wished Abe would stop bothering me and vanish, and to make a long story short, in order to aggravate me, he did.

JOAN: Wish him back.

COHN: If life were only so simple.

JOAN: The first wish worked.

COHN: A trick.

JOAN: Are you afraid?

COHN: (*smiles*) Afraid? Of what? Of wishes? Of voices? The only thing I'm afraid of is insanity. And that's a losing battle. Also death. I'm afraid of death a little. Also age. Of all the possible choices is that so much to be afraid of?

JOAN: I believe in your wishes!

COHN: That's reassuring.

JOAN: I do!

COHN: (*shakes his head sadly*) What do you know? Nothing. No background. I'll make a bet, no education. What do you have for credentials? Nothing!

FIRST AND SECOND VOICES: *Us!*

COHN: Less than nothing!

JOAN: I was once very much like you.

COHN: (*enraged*) No one was *ever* like me! (*calms himself*) Don't be presumptuous.

JOAN: I was sad all the time.

COHN: I'm not sad.

JOAN: In despair.

COHN: This isn't despair.

JOAN: What do you call it?

COHN: Realism.

JOAN: Then why is it so much like despair?

COHN: I didn't say they're not connected. But they're not the same. With despair you feel there's no hope so you might as well die; with realism you feel there's no hope but you get a kick out of it.

JOAN: I wanted to die!

COHN: See? We're oceans apart.

JOAN: I lived in a sea of despair —

COHN: Not the same!

JOAN: — with my wicked stepmother and her three wicked daughters.

COHN: Wait. You're confused. That's Cinderella.

JOAN: Exactly.

COHN: You're Joan of Arc.

JOAN: Oh, I don't mean *now*.

COHN: You used to be Cinderella?

JOAN: Of course!

COHN: But now you're Joan of Arc? (JOAN *nods, patiently*) Well, you're certainly working your way up in the world. Of course, instead of marrying Prince Charming you get burned at the stake, but you do make sainthood while all Cinderella gets is to live happily ever after. And in one case Shaw writes about you and in the other case, Walt Disney. All in all, I'd say you made a wise choice.

JOAN: Choice? What choice? After the ball, I thought the Prince loved me and I dreamed — well, no matter what I dreamed — he came looking for me, door to door, with a glass slipper. Like a salesman! . . . Can you imagine my shame? That he, my true love, would only know me by trying a shoe on my foot! I walked barefoot on rocks, soaked my feet in brine, anything to fail such a test. But it was never to be made. One door away from ours the Prince was suddenly called to war and I was left with a broken heart and a size nine foot. So I became a nun. A very poor nun. Night after night, visions of our Lord came to me bearing a glass slipper. So I fled the nunnery and traveled the land as a migrant fruit-picker. I married and begat five Portuguese children. My husband was a sot and beat me. When my children grew of age, they beat me. So I threw myself off a bridge, into the river. I landed on my feet and, to my considerable surprise, saw that I was standing on the water. I walked on the water for miles trying to decipher the meaning of my fate. Half-mad with the complexities of it all, I tried again to drown myself: this time by standing on my head and ducking it under the water. But the further under I ducked, the more the water level receded, until finally, the river ran dry. I knew that it was a sign! I fell to my knees and prayed God for His forgiveness and that I should prove myself worthy of being His servant. I prayed for six days and six nights and on the seventh day my voices came and told me who I was and what I must do. And now, praise God, I am Joan and I am here!

COHN: (*stares at her, then after a long silence*) I really miss Abe.

JOAN: You don't believe my story.

COHN: You can walk on water, bring back Abe.

JOAN: Voices? May I?

FIRST VOICE: He shoots us and then he wants favors.

SECOND VOICE: He's got two more wishes. Why come to us?

JOAN: You *can* wish him back.

COHN: Oy.

JOAN: You can.

COHN: I can't.

JOAN: Try.

COHN: I tried once. Look what happened!

JOAN: It came true.

COHN: It didn't come true. Certain things happened — I can't go into details — you don't know everything —

JOAN: You refuse to wish.

COHN: Let's drop the subject.

JOAN: You don't want it to come true.

COHN: I said —

JOAN: You don't want your friend back.

COHN: I want quiet! I want peace and quiet!

JOAN: But not your friend.

COHN: Him too! But first, quiet!

JOAN: Then wish!

COHN: You're a child!

JOAN: Wish!

COHN: Games!

JOAN: Wish!

COHN: Nag! Shrew! I wish! All right? I wish!

JOAN: What?

COHN: I wish Abe was back! You satisfied? So where is he? You see him? Where is he? (JOAN *looks around.*) You're so smart. (*She looks in the bedroom.*) Miss know-it-all. (*He turns his back on her in contempt. She comes out of the bedroom, opens the lid of the trunk, and looks in.*)

JOAN: It came true! (COHN *whirls, looks on in horror.*)

COHN: Close it! What are you doing in there? Mind your own business!

JOAN: Come! Look!

COHN: Who do you think you are!

JOAN: Dear God! He's dead! (*crosses herself*, COHN retreats.) Your friend is dead.

COHN: He's not dead.

JOAN: He is dead.

COHN: *He's* dead. But Abe's not dead.

JOAN: But this is Abe.

COHN: He's not Abe. Abe is alive.

JOAN: You poor man. Your mind has cracked in grief. This is Abe.

COHN: Abe is shorter.

JOAN: This man is short.

COHN: Abe doesn't have a beard.

JOAN: This man is clean-shaven.

COHN: Abe is swarthy.

JOAN: In life this man was swarthy.

COHN: (*crosses over to the trunk, fed up*) For once and for all — (*looks in trunk*) Abe! (*falls into the trunk in a dead faint*)

BLACKOUT

ACT I

Scene 2

The room as before, but empty except for ABE's body in the trunk. The rug is pulled back to expose ABE's legs sticking out of the side. COHN and JOAN are in COHN's bedroom, the curtain drawn.

JOAN: Drink this — not too fast. You're spilling it all over yourself. That's better. There. There.

COHN: (*coughs*) Go away. Leave me alone.

JOAN: I know what's in your mind.

COHN: Go. The Emperor's waiting.

JOAN: You plan to do away with yourself.

COHN: What I do is my business.

JOAN: Instead of going along making things awful, why not make them better? Instead of joining Abe, why not have Abe join *us*!

Why not bring Abe back to life?!

COHN: It's a deal. How?

JOAN: You have one more wish.

COHN: Those son-of-a-bitch wishes! (*sound of a slap, COHN cries out.*)

JOAN: I'm a servant of the Lord! Watch your tongue!

COHN: Go away, will you? Just go away.

JOAN: Did I hurt you?

COHN: Go, please go.

JOAN: What if I brought him back to life?

COHN: Lady —

JOAN: Would you then go with me to see the Emperor?

COHN: Oy!

JOAN: If I brought Abe back to life?

COHN: If you brought Abe back to life I'd believe you were Jesus Christ himself. Don't hit me!

JOAN: Don't blaspheme!

COHN: Don't nag!

JOAN: Would you believe?

COHN: Would I believe? I'd believe! I'd believe! (*ABE's legs twitch.*)

JOAN: That I am Joan?

COHN: All right!

JOAN: And you will follow me?

COHN: All right! (*ABE's legs twitch again. His head appears out of the trunk. He climbs out, looks at his typewriter, punches a key, and crosses to the refrigerator.*)

ABE: Cohn! What's to eat? (*COHN appears in the doorway. He cannot believe his eyes. He starts to collapse. JOAN catches him and helps him to a chair. ABE turns around and sees them. He shuts the refrigerator door and stares coldly at JOAN.*) Company?

COHN: You're dead.

ABE: (*coldly*) I didn't know you were having a party.

COHN: You're walking — you're talking — (*COHN rises, starts to ABE*)

ABE: I hope I'm not getting in the way. I know nobody invited me. I just live here.

COHN: (*goes to ABE and embraces him*) He lives, he breathes — (*holds ABE away from him and stares at him happily*) he smells!

ABE: You're drunk.

COHN: (*to JOAN*) Has there ever been such a friend, to rise from the dead in a rotten mood? I love this man! (*hugs ABE, ABE breaks free.*)

ABE: I beg your pardon. That person?

COHN: That's Joan! Joan, here's Abe!

ABE: I beg your pardon. An old friend?

COHN: How old is old? Ten minutes? A half hour? It feels like half a lifetime. It was *your* lifetime, that I'll tell you!

ABE: Riddles. You invited her?

COHN: Not two minutes ago you were dead.

ABE: You wish.

COHN: I wished you back. They sent you back dead.

ABE: Intrigue is going on here. This is my house. I beg your pardon, Miss. It's not personal. The house is in my name. But can I ever invite guests? Who was my last guest? Fifteen years ago. I'll show you the guest book. Look — here's the guest book. Blank, see? Hundreds of pages — wait, here's the guest — no, it reminds me — not even a real guest — a Jehovah's Witness. Came in out of the blue. We had coffee, a pleasant chat about religion. Cohn, here, throws a fit. Facts are facts, Cohn. It's nothing personal, Miss. Cohn and I don't entertain. He agreed and I agreed. When we entertain we differ. It ends up in a fight. So we agreed to live and let live and not entertain. I didn't make up the rule. Now he breaks it. Is this a way to run a household? Anarchy?! I beg your pardon, Cohn, I thought we'd agreed — anarchy is for outside.

COHN: (*to JOAN*) Is that a mouth? I love that mouth! (*beaming at him*) Abe, not five minutes ago you know what you were?

ABE: What?

COHN: You weren't. That's what you were. You were *not*! You were dead! You were dead! You were dead! (*smile slowly fades*) You weren't dead. (*turns to JOAN*) He wasn't dead.

JOAN: He was dead.

COHN: How could he be alive if he was dead?

JOAN: You saw him!

COHN: For half a second.

JOAN: He was cold.

COHN: Who felt him?

JOAN: I did!

COHN: I thought you were a saint. Now you're a doctor?

JOAN: You're renegeing on your promise.

COHN: Don't be foolish; he only fainted.

ABE: I didn't faint.

COHN: You fainted.

ABE: Never.

COHN: In the trunk.

ABE: In what trunk?

COHN: That trunk!

ABE: I never fainted in a trunk in my life.

COHN: Not five minutes ago!

ABE: Five minutes ago I was sitting in my chair like always.

COHN: Then how come you didn't see her come in? (ABE is *stopped*.) Because you fainted!

ABE: Because you sneaked her in here before! When I wasn't looking!

COHN: *What* before?

ABE: Who knows, with a man as corrupt as you?! It could have been *years*! Who is she? Why is she wearing that armor?!

COHN: You're all excited. Calm down.

ABE: I don't like betrayal. I beg your pardon.

COHN: There's no betrayal.

ABE: Consorting with the outside.

COHN: No —

ABE: Spreading false rumors.

COHN: Abe, listen — calm now — what's the very last thing you remember?

ABE: Your betrayal.

COHN: (*reasonably*) Abe, *I* fainted and *I* remember.

ABE: I never fainted in my life! I beg your pardon, but I have never vomited, I have never fainted, and I have never gotten drunk.

Certain things I do not do. I have never done. So you and your chippie, don't try to pull a fast one.

COHN: (*stares hard at him*) You were dead. (*to JOAN*) It's the only explanation. He was dead.

ABE: I didn't faint so I must be dead. That's logic.

COHN: Not now, before.

ABE: How could I be dead before and alive now? That's consistency.

COHN: Wait a minute! Stop the presses! Is this my old friend Abe talking? The very Abe who believes in genies and three wishes and that I could be Mozart and him Jefferson?

ABE: There's no inconsistency.

COHN: No inconsistency?!

ABE: It's perfectly plausible that I could die Abe and come back somebody else, but is it plausible that I should die Abe and come back Abe?

COHN: Is it plausible that you should die *Jefferson* and come back Abe?

ABE: — in the same house, with the same Cohn? A frog into a Prince I could believe. Change! That's plausible! But sameness! Eternal sameness! No, I beg your pardon, I can't be convinced.

COHN: (*exasperated*) I'm through wasting my breath. (JOAN *crosses to ABE. He backs away. She takes his hand and stares into his eyes.*)

JOAN: I am Joan of Arc.

ABE: It's possible. You could be anybody. I won't fight over it.

COHN: He doesn't believe you.

ABE: It doesn't matter what I believe, it's what you believe.

COHN: She believes you were dead!

ABE: (*to COHN*) That's her privilege.

JOAN: You *were* dead.

ABE: (*to JOAN*) As far as you were concerned. You never saw me, I never saw you. In that sense I was dead.

JOAN: I brought you back to life.

ABE: In a physical way? Well, who knows? It's been a long time. But I do feel a certain arousal —

COHN: (*groans and buries his head in his hands*) It's not opinion! It's not an argument. It's a fact. A fact! A fact! She's Joan of Arc! She has voices! She brought you back to life! (*to JOAN*) Strike him dead and bring him back again! (*to ABE*) And this time pay attention!

ABE: You ask me is this Abe? I ask you is this Cohn? You believe she's Joan of Arc?

COHN: No doubt about it.

ABE: And I was dead?

COHN: No question.

ABE: And she brought me back to life?

COHN: Believe me, it's a mixed blessing.

ABE: (*to JOAN*) Huh — must you be able to argue!

COHN: I believe in what's concrete — in what I see, until I see something different. That at least is consistent. (*to JOAN*) Are you ready?

JOAN: You'll come with me to see the Emperor?

ABE: Now comes an Emperor.

COHN: She and I have a mission!

JOAN: (*to ABE*) And you too.

ABE: Me? I'm dead.

JOAN: You won't come with us?

ABE: I beg your pardon. Two's company, three's a crowd.

COHN: Look, are we going to go or are we going to stay here and argue?

ABE: I don't want to keep you.

JOAN: (*confused*) I'm not sure I should leave you.

COHN: Joan — any time you're ready.

ABE: Twenty years, Cohn, and now you go outside.

COHN: I'm not rigid!

ABE: You've changed!

COHN: Is that a crime?

ABE: (*deeply disturbed*) It's — it's a miracle! (*to JOAN*) To change Cohn — to make him move an inch, not to mention he goes outside is nothing less than a miracle. Who are you?

JOAN: I told you.

ABE: (*stares at her for a long time*) It's possible.

JOAN: Then you'll come?

ABE: Impossible.

JOAN: You have to come!

COHN: You can't stay here alone.

ABE: I'll manage.

COHN: Who'll cook for you?

ABE: I'll learn.

COHN: You won't learn.

ABE: Then I won't learn.

COHN: You'll starve.

ABE: It's possible. But unlikely.

COHN: (*to JOAN*) I don't have all day, you know.

JOAN: We must go. (*opens front door, COHN goes out.*)

COHN: Hey, it's not so bad! (*JOAN takes a long, sad look at ABE.*)

FIRST VOICE: Joan —

JOAN: (*freezes*) Yes.

ABE: What's that?

SECOND VOICE: You can't leave.

ABE: Who said that?

JOAN: But my mission —

FIRST VOICE: Your mission is to take two of every kind.

ABE: (*looks around*) Who said that?

JOAN: I know.

FIRST VOICE: That includes schleppes.

ABE: (*still looking*) Who said that?

FIRST VOICE: You need one more. (*ABE walks around looking for the Voices. JOAN moves away from the door, back into the room.*

COHN appears in the doorway.)

COHN: Well? (*nobody moves*)

CURTAIN

Alvin W. Gouldner

MARXISM AND MAO

This is the project: to begin a Marxist critique of Marxism itself. There can be little question that, among the requirements of such an auto-critique, we must include an historically situated analysis of the internal contradictions of Marxism. The core of a Marxist critique of Marxism would, then, recognize that Marxism has its own internal contradictions; that it, too, and not only bourgeois ideology, has such contradictions; that these contradictions are not simply outmoded vestiges of Marxism's bourgeois heritage or Victorian prejudices, but remain a living part and an essential key to Marxism's ongoing present and its future prospect. This concern with the contradictions of Marxism will be taken as the expression of a threatening animus by vulgar Marxists, but it will be regarded as only normal from the standpoint of Mao's Marxism, which understands contradiction as the universal mechanism of all social development, including its own.

In the space available, I can only briefly allude to the existence of two different paradigms of Marxism, Critical Marxism and Scientific Marxism. These are differentiated as modes of intellectual analysis, in their epistemologies and ontologies, in their diagnoses of capitalism and in their conception of socialism, as well as in their revolutionary strategies. A fuller analysis of these differences will be discussed in my forthcoming book, *For Sociology: Renewal and Critique in Sociology Today*; here I will deal briefly only with their differences as analytic systems. As systems of analysis, Critical and Scientific Marxism are partly complementary and partly divergent. They are divergent paradigms because (as Marx acknowledged) the object of sci-

ence is to discover laws independent of human will and determinative of it, while a "critique" aims at establishing the manner in which human history is an outcome of the hidden potency of men. The basic conclusion of the Left Hegelian critique of *religion* was to show that God's being was entirely a postulation of *man* and an expression of *man's* own alienated being. A critique, then, aims at making men's potency more fully manifest so that men might then make their own history consciously rather than blindly. A natural science, in contrast, will, by ascertaining the laws that presumably determine human will, allow those having technical knowledge of these laws to apply their knowledge in a technological way and to formulate the problem of social change as a *technical* problem.

In a "scientific" socialism, the technical conferences of bureaucratized "vanguards" tend to be substituted for the political discussion and education of masses. A critique, however, aims to transform the political process by deepening the mass consciousness and liberating it from its false consciousness. Here the political process and outcome are seen as profoundly affected by the nature of men's consciousness. The politics and praxis of a socialism conceived as a critique will thus differ substantially from that conceived as science. There are, then, two tendencies in Marxism, both authentic to it; one toward critique, which I call "Critical Marxism," and another toward science, which has called itself "Scientific Marxism."

Transformations in the everyday life of Western capitalism underlie the decline of Scientific Marxism and the rise of Critical Marxism: successful revolutions in industrially backward countries; the accommodation of the proletariat in industrially advanced countries; the militancy of nonimpoverished groups, etc. The emergence of Maoism, however, as a special case of a Critical Marxism distinct, in part, from that of Cuban socialism, illustrates the way in which a theory is changed by diffusion to a society which has an everyday life that is (and always was) different from the everyday life of the society in which it first originated.

Maoism seems distinguished by the emphasis it places upon the universality of contradiction. To that extent Maoism represents a new and distinct stage in the world development of Marxism because it has achieved a reflexivity superior to that of Western Marxisms; it can and has faced the "bad news" about its own internal contra-

dictions. (This clearly was one aspect in the struggle between Mao and Liu Shao-Chi, whom Mao saw as ignoring the contradictions of socialism itself.)

Western Marxism, unlike Maoism, was developed in a Christian culture whose everyday life has long been sedimented with millenarian religious fantasies often sublimated into a political vision of some final, climactic coming. Western Marxism's conception of socialism and communism have rested tacitly upon the millenarian and other background assumptions characteristic of Christianity. Maoism, however, is the first Marxism that matured in a non-Christian civilization. Nourished in a deteriorating Confucian culture that has no concepts of salvation or of an afterlife, and which is oriented to an immanent order rather than one that is transcendental, Maoism is the most realistic of Marxisms. It regards those Marxists who think socialism devoid of contradictions as naive if not as faintly uncivilized.

There are, of course, various other conditions under which a theory may undergo change. One of these is when the social strata that had created and had fostered the theory itself changes or passes away. And so it is with Marxism. It is not only the change in the everyday life of industrially advanced societies, and not only its move from the everyday life of a Christian to that of a Confucian society, but, also, a change in the social strata with which Marxism has been intimately associated that promises a radical change in Marxism. Here I refer *not* to the passivity and accommodation of the *proletariat* and its failure thus far as the promised historical agency of socialism, but, also, to the changes and crisis of the *intelligentsia*, the social strata by which Marxism was created, that brings us to the deepest level in the crisis of Marxism.

The most profound indication of this development is to be found in the societal re-mapping proposed by Maoism which has sought to lay the groundwork for the elimination of the academic intelligentsia. As Robert Guillaín remarks in *Le Monde*, "It is no over-simplification of the massive series of reforms [of the "Cultural Revolution"] . . . to say that their key objective — defined by Chairman Mao himself — is the elimination of the 'academic intellectual.'" As the intensity of the Red Guard movement subsided, it became increasingly evident that the elimination of the academic intelligentsia was one of the most important items on the agenda of the Cultural Revolution.

This effort is resonated in the West by the antiintellectualism of the bureaucratized *lumpen* intelligentsia and in the self-hatred of certain *gauchiste* intellectuals.

Jean-Paul Sartre expresses an essentially Maoist view of the intellectual's future when he remarks: "his privileged status is over . . . it is sheer bad faith, hence counterrevolutionary, for the intellectual to dwell on his own problems . . . he owes his knowledge to [the masses] and must be with them and in them: he must be dedicated to work for their problems. . . ." Asked whether the recent publication of his massive book on Flaubert was not in contradiction to this very position, Sartre humbly replies, "My book on Flaubert may, indeed, be a form of petty-bourgeois escapism. . . ."

Maoism is a Marxism that, according to its self-understanding, strives to live in the purer morality of ordinary people, rather than through the theoretical acumen of a privileged elite. In this view, Mao's closing of the Chinese universities was a kind of sociological surgery that sought to create a new social order devoid of an academic intelligentsia. From June, 1966, until about September, 1970, universities throughout China were closed down and many (some ten out of 40 in Peking) still remain shut. And not only the universities but Chinese culture more broadly appears, even in Guillain's sympathetic account, "to be in a state of suspended animation. Literature has virtually disappeared. . . Painters and sculptors produce endless versions of the Great Architect. The cinema has almost ground to a halt and the theater has a repertory of half a dozen plays which are presented time and again. . . ." The latest foreign book on the shelves of Peking University's library dates from 1966; and many municipal libraries, museums, research institutes, and bookstores still remain closed.

Marxism, however, was in the beginning the creation of a library-haunting, bookstore browsing, museum-loving — and hence leisure-possessing — academic intelligentsia of the very sort that Maoism now seeks to excise. It does not matter, of course, that Engels himself had no university training, and it does not matter that Marx never achieved the professorship that, when young, he had coveted; for both were Mandarins at heart. They had both assimilated and embodied the culture of the Western university. Marx was the product and possessor of a high European culture who knew his Goethe by

heart; who read his Aeschylus in the original; who had a boundless respect for Shakespeare, whom he had his daughters memorize; who took pleasure in reading two or three novels at one time, ranking Balzac and Cervantes before other novelists; who, when disturbed, might take refuge in algebra; and who actually wrote an infinitesimal calculus. In a letter to his daughter Laura in 1868, he describes himself as “. . . a machine condemned to devour books. . . .” When Marx died, on March 14, 1883, he was where one might expect him — at his desk.

Whatever its ultimate destiny and destination, Marxism was originally a creation of the West. Born of European culture, it is simply unthinkable without the complex of institutions that center on the university, which trains and provides livings for a secular intelligentsia. Marx and Engels, and all the epigones of every nationality that follow after them, are unthinkable without the countless books, journals, newspapers, libraries, bookstores, publishing houses, and even party schools, whose cadres and culture constitute a dense infrastructure at whose center there is the Western university: no university, no intelligentsia, no Marxism.

The gulf between Maoism and Soviet Marxism derives importantly from the fact that Soviet Marxism understands and respects this, while Maoism, however, understands but rejects it. Soviet Marxism and Stalinism sought to control the university and to guarantee the loyalty of intellectuals and scientists to party precepts and leadership; it never sought to stop the university and to eliminate the self-reproduction of the academic intelligentsia, as Maoism has.

Intellectuals are an historically recent social stratum, essentially emerging with the bourgeois revolution during the onset of modernization in the West. They have, however, been largely recruited from the secular professions of relatively older and more humanistic vintage. They have more likely been scholars, journalists, academicians, artists, writers, or lawyers, rather than engineers or scientists. Characteristically, then, the intelligentsia have been associated with long established occupations, and were linked to educational and socializing systems that possess and insist on some measure of autonomy.

Unlike the new engineers and scientists, who almost immediately had greater career opportunities and public prestige with the advent of the bourgeois economy, the occupations with which intellectuals

were associated had an ambivalent relation to the modern bourgeois order. On the one hand, some were given increased support by the state, in order to win the allegiance of secular ideologists who might help it in controlling the Church, and, in general, they were increasingly released from the personalized controls of patrons or from personalized service as tutors. On the other hand, however, their livelihoods were often subject to the insecurities of the impersonal marketplace and, except for a few literary "stars," the new world of emerging industrialism did not hold this language-manipulating elite in great esteem.

Intellectuals, then, were a social stratum that were freed of corporate and patron controls, but were also limited in the enjoyment of their new freedom by poverty and neglect: bohemia with its deprivations was not only a preferred style of life but for many it was also a necessity. Intellectuals were an elite possessed of a privileged education, but usually lacking in any commensurate *power* — to which they felt their superior education entitled them — as well as lacking a commensurate *income*. They were, in short, characterized by the tensions typically generated by such status disparities. The very society that had created intellectuals allowed them only a marginal place, so that they were at once both beholden and hostile to the new society. After the passing of the "Old Regimes," they were the structurally alienated.

Despite the differences between Enlightenment and Romantic intellectuals, Western intellectuals — Marxist or bourgeois — nonetheless shared certain important values. They were committed to the importance of intellectual productivity and performance; whether courtly *philosophes* or bohemian Romantics, they were commonly hard workers. They usually believed in the value of advanced education and of universities, even if they did not always agree on what constituted a good education. They were rationalists even when promulgating an antiintellectualism. Even the Romantics, despite their special interest in Oriental civilization and languages, undoubtedly viewed European and Western societies as their paradigms — willy, nilly, all were Westernizers. Intellectuals were, too, commonly "universalistic" in their value commitments, believing that a man's rewards should be proportionate to his performances and achievements. Thus even Marx says under socialism the slogan should be: from each

according to his ability, to each according to his work. In this universalism, intellectuals were essentially sanctioning the requirements of the *educated* sector of the middle class while embarrassing the *propertied* sector of the middle class, which believed that its property entitled it to unearned incomes. They were also commonly critical of established, respectable religions; if intellectuals were by no means uniformly atheists, they were often modernizers who felt that religion needed to adapt to the requirements of modernity. They also commonly resented and challenged authority based on lineage and ascription, affirming the rights of the talented, whether talent was seen as due to educated practice or to inborn genius. While some Romantic intellectuals might nostalgically idealize rusticity, even they were not slow to seek their fortunes in salons, courts, marketplaces, and other urbane environments, and they had the cosmopolitans' urge to keep in touch with the urban centers. If intellectuals did not always say (with Socrates) that the city was their teacher, they had no doubt that the people of the city were important audiences and markets.

In contrast, Maoist socialism does not regard either urbanization or "Westernization" as the last word. It is *not* obvious, moreover, that Maoism even conceives itself as engaged in "modernization." It is not modernization but "cultural revitalization" to which the Chinese Revolution seems committed; it seeks an historically unique kind of revitalization, since it does not look to the glories of the past, and in that sense is not "nativistic," and does not aim to change itself by Westernization. It is this unique "development" policy that undergirds the educational policies of the Cultural Revolution and its effort to alter the intelligentsia. In the self-understanding of Maoism, the aim is to debourgeoisify the intellectual, to eliminate the rift between intellectuals and masses, to change the class character of intellectuals by changing their class origins, so that in future they derive predominantly from workers or peasants, and themselves have an extensive personal experience of laboring as peasants or workers. This, to repeat, is Maoism's self-understanding of its policy toward the intelligentsia.

Yet if Maoism is a critique of the bourgeois intellectual in terms of egalitarian values, if it rejects the old intellectuals because they were an elite set above the masses, it remains difficult to understand why Maoism has allowed a great gap to persist in the income levels of

workers and intellectuals. Top academicians may earn as much as seven to eight times more than the average worker, and the gap between top and bottom levels in the University itself is about 12-to-one, and has over the years been growing. This inconsistency, however, would be reconciled if we did not accept the self-understanding of Maoism, and, instead of conceiving it as an effort to overthrow *all* elitism, we think of it, rather, as an effort to make a *new* elite, an elite which has broken radically with the traditions of the past, above all, an elite which rejects Western models of economic development.

Maoism's policy toward the intelligentsia is, in part, grounded in the very special conditions of the Chinese economy and social structure. Michael Frolic quotes a Chinese official who makes the major point: "The new Chinese educational system is designed to maximize the even development of a peasant society." The crucial statistic is that China has 150,000,000 city dwellers but some 650,000,000 peasants. (Contrast this with the United States where the college population now exceeds the farm population, even when the latter includes women and children.) Maoist policies limit the priorities assigned to urban development and aim to curb urbanization as well as to decentralize industry.

Michael Kosok formulates this development from the standpoint of a Critical Marxism:

. . . the Chinese are attempting to destroy at its root the classical Western antagonism between city and country, industry and agriculture, culture and the hinter-lands, "production-control-direction" centers and "consumption-living" centers . . . to decentralize and ruralize the land instead of regimenting the country-side to the city and turning the whole land into a gigantic production unit.

(The proletariat is therefore not just the *industrial* worker, but the entire working population which is alienated from its praxis and the control of its living process.)

This is an historically unique policy of economic development that must be understood as the domestic counterpart to the *foreign* policy of a country whose technologically superior enemies threaten it with nuclear blackmail. In one part, Mao's hedging about urbanization is an effort to arrange China's internal social order so that, if it must, it can survive even nuclear warfare. China will, therefore, for a long while remain a predominantly peasant and rural society, and, given Maoism's unique conception of development, it has far less

need of academic intellectuals. Indeed, Guillain claims that "China's need for university-educated personnel is still relatively limited . . . [and] the country even had a glut of graduates before the Cultural Revolution."

Maoism's policies toward intellectuals have in *part* to be understood, then, in the light of China's limited need for them at this stage of its development. Mao's unique policy of economic development is the grounding of his policy concerning the intellectuals. Nonetheless, the central fact remains that Mao's policies were *militantly* antiintellectual. They were inspired less by market considerations of supply and demand than by *political* considerations: they were inspired, specifically, by the intellectuals' tendency to suspect and to resist Mao's fundamental policy of limiting urbanization and decentralizing industry. It is, I believe, the intellectuals' resistance to *this* unique conception of development that Mao regards as proof of their abiding bourgeois and antisocialist character. It is, above all, intellectuals' resistance to a new and un-Western form of development that led Mao to seek the radical transformation of intellectuals. As Guillain describes it:

In the Chairman's view the intellectuals are suspect because . . . they have been a source of resistance or reaction to Communist ideas. . . . A characteristic Mao statement given wide publicity during the Cultural Revolution ran: "I shall always believe that the vast majority of intellectuals, both within and outside the party, are basically bourgeois."

Mao's attack upon intellectuals is also grounded in an impulse to make a great rupture with the past, to make a vast leap forward away from it. It is thus not simply that intellectuals had a different, more Westernizing, conception of economic development but, also, that their link to the past was so profound, that led Mao to come down against them. Inevitably, intellectuals do embody the heritage of the past. However radical they are, intellectuals are, in the history-rootedness of their learning, inevitably if unwittingly engaged in the *preservation* of the past. Their very "bookishness" marks them as the agents of cultural continuity. Mao, however, wanted to make a break with the history of China; more than that, he also wanted to make a break with the history of *socialism* itself and with the history of revolutions past. Mao's antiintellectualism, then, is a way of destroying the

links with the past and the limits of the past itself; it is not an expression of a contempt for mind or learning.

Mao has proceeded from the profound understanding that the most fundamental limits on the revolution were not located outside, in the enemy. The diagnosis that the main danger to the revolution is to be found in the resistance and power of the enemy *outside* was certainly compatible with the experience of the Soviet State. But a more voluntaristic Marxism such as Mao's, sensitive to the potency of consciousness and commitment, is especially alive to the dangers that derive from ambivalence and faintheartedness. From a voluntaristic standpoint, intellectuals have a very special importance and, for that reason, it becomes especially important that they be viewed as politically trustworthy.

Those whose ideological view has been sharpened by a kind of Hegelian consciousness look out on the world with a very special perspective. They have a firm insight into the way in which the "Object" is the creation of the "Subject" — even if the Object be the enemy and the Subject the revolutionary Self — and they therefore always know that the trouble is not only in the stars but also in themselves. They are not, in short, given to vulgar externalizing; their talent and weakness is instead for the subtle searching out of the enemy within, and for internecine vigilance and struggle against him.

Maoism has the deepest and most troubling understanding that a Marxist can have: it understands that Marxism, too, has a false consciousness; it knows that the weakness of Marxism is not only produced by its *enemies* but also by Marxism's *friends*. Maoism understands *this*: that Marxism is the child of the very society that it seeks to overthrow and that, as such, there is a way in which Marxism not only opposes the Old Regimes but also has a measure of affinity with them. Maoism understands that if the capitalist order gives birth to the "seeds of its own destruction," then the new order is indeed the product of the old order's seed, not only its enemy, and that there is a certain continuity between Marxism and the old order, not only a revolutionary rupture. Maoism's fear is this: that the old order *lives on* in the new one; that the old order conquers in the midst of its defeat; that the old order passes part of its seed-heritage on and lives *through* the very triumph of the new order. Maoism understands that this is how it is with Marxism, too, in its relation to the old order that it seeks to destroy.

The stoical wisdom of the Chairman, then, is this: there is no permanent revolution, no way forward for a revolution that seeks to live, except by eating its own children; for it is precisely they who constitute the last bridge to the past, and it is they who set the sturdiest limits on the revolution's future. Sartre's Maoist consciousness understands all this very well: ". . . in the past, the winners have always thought about stopping. Historians claim revolutionaries never know where or when to stop. But it is the contrary. They always do stop, so that the next generation of revolutionaries has felt obliged to go after the previous generation. It happened four times during the French Revolution of 1789-94. Perhaps it would be better if for once a revolutionary movement was ready and willing to go all the way . . . of all the groups within the left today, the undogmatic Maoists . . . are most prepared to do that. . . ."

Maoism is the Marxism that recognizes — or better still, senses without recognizing — that there is no way forward for the revolution except through the death of Marxism; that the final limits on the revolution are those imposed by and built into Marxism itself; that these limits lay sedimented in the revolutionary intelligentsia, and in the university system that socially reproduces the intelligentsia. Maoism is the Marxism that was brought to the brink of understanding that one has to choose: either Marxism or the permanent revolution — but not both!

One pole from which the crisis of Marxism spreads is the wandering and floundering of the working class; of the proletariat that surrendered its initiative to self-anointed vanguard parties, that accommodated itself both to the great economic crises of capitalism as well as to the seductions of capitalist affluence. At the other pole from which the crisis of Marxism spreads is the decline of the academic intelligentsia.

The relationship between the intelligentsia and the proletariat is a relationship between an author and his protagonist; between the cameraman and the actor; between latent structure and manifest structure. Or, as Marx once spoke of them, it is a relation between the head and the heart of the revolution. Together, the proletariat and intelligentsia once constituted the basic infrastructure of enacted Marxism. As both are in the process of being historically transformed, the sociological foundations of Marxism itself are crumbling, and the

intellectual foundations require profound rethinking, as Lukács himself said in his last interview.

The ultimate false consciousness of Marxism is that the historical role attributed by it to the proletariat was assigned by an invisible intelligentsia, by an intelligentsia that never made an appearance in its own theory, and whose existence and nature are therefore never systematically known even to itself. It is because Maoism has seen through to this ultimately concealed level in Marxism itself that Maoism marks the highest and final stage in the historical development of Marxism. It is precisely because of this that Maoism cannot allow itself to recognize what it gives every evidence of so clearly understanding; namely, that the way forward for the revolution requires an end to the contradictions of Marxism — which is to say, an end to “Marxism.”

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POEMS

Joseph Brodsky

AENEAS AND DIDO

The great man stared out through the empty window,
but her entire world ended at the border
of his broad Grecian tunic, whose abundance
of folds had the fixed, frozen look of seawaves
long since immobilized.

And he still stared
through the wide window with a gaze so distant
that his lips seemed to freeze and form a seashell,
one that concealed an inward, muted roar.
The shimmering horizon in his goblet
was motionless.

But her vast love appeared
to be only a fish, a fish which yet
might plunge into the sea after his ship,
knifing the waves with its slim supple body,
and somehow overtake him — except that he,
in thought, already strode upon dry land.
The sea became a sea of shining tears.
But, as we know, precisely at the moment
of our deepest despair fresh winds spring up.
The great man sailed from Carthage.

Dido stood
alone before the bonfire which her soldiers
had kindled by the city's walls, and there —
as in a vision trembling between flame
and smoke — she watched great Carthage silently
crumble to ash,

long ages before Cato's prophecy.

Translated by George L. Kline.

NOTE: *An earlier version of this translation appeared in Russian Literature TriQuarterly, Fall 1971. The present version is considerably revised.*

Anna Akhmatova

IN 1940

At the burial of an epoch
no psalm is heard at the tomb.
Soon nettles and thistles
will decorate the spot.
The only busy hands are those
of the gravediggers. Faster! Faster!
And it's quiet, Lord, so quiet
you can hear time passing.

Some day it will surface again
like a corpse in a spring river;
but no mother's son will claim her,
and grandsons, sick at heart,
will turn away.

Sorrowing heads . . .
The moon swinging like a pendulum . . .

And now, over death-struck Paris,
such silence falls.

II (TO THE LONDONERS)

Time is now writing with impassive hand
Shakespeare's black play, his twenty-fourth.
What can we do, who know the bitter taste,
but here, by the leaden river, re-enact
those tragic lines of Hamlet, Caesar, Lear? —
or maybe guide, as escort to her tomb,
child Juliet, poor dove, with songs and torches;
or play the Peeping Tom in Macbeth's windows,
trembling no less than the hired murderer.
Only not this one, not this one, not this one—
this one we do not have the strength to read.

III (A SHADOW)

What does a certain woman know
about the hour of death?

—*O. Mandelstam*

You swim up from the past, of all our set
the one most rosy, elegant, and tall.

And your transparent profile — how it sways
through carriage windows! Why does memory insist?
Angel or bird — we argued which you were.
The poet said you were his girl of straw.
Through the black lashes of your Georgian eyes
affection flowed on everyone around.
O shadow! Forgive me, but the clement weather,
Flaubert, insomnia, the smell of lilacs
have turned my thoughts to you, as if that day
could bloom again, cloudless and languishing . . .
your day, beauty of the year '13.
But I am troubled by such memories,
O shadow!

IV

I know, if anyone does,
the trails and cliffs of insomnia,
but what I did not expect was this cavalry charge
to the blast of a wild trumpet.
Whose are these doors I open?
Somebody's fled from his nest.
How still! How still! Through the mirrors
of strangers white shadows swim.
And that thing shaping there is Denmark—no,
it's Normandy. Or is that ghost myself,
returned to my old haunt,
and this a new edition
of my buried life?

V

But I warn you:
this is my last existence.
Not as swallow, not as maple,
not as reed, or evening-star,
not as water from a spring,
not as bells in a tower,
will I return to vex you,
or walk through strangers' dreams
with stanchless groans.

*Translated by Stanley Kunitz (with Max Hayward). From
Poems of Akhmatova to be published by Atlantic-Little Brown.*

Alexander Aronov

A LITTLE GEOGRAPHY

Although it sounds strange,
maybe

there are other countries on our planets:

The Sovereign Nation of Musicians,
The Heterodoxy of Empty Heads,
of Fat Bellies, or Dull Minds,
The Far Country of Lovers,
of Fire Fighters, of Jazz Labor Heroes,
The Democracy of Clever Ones,
The Soviet of the Stupid Ones.

Labels!

You know

who is who.

You've seen it, haven't you?

If not, read it
in all the papers:

The Republic of Readers and the Republic of Writers
are breaking off diplomatic relations.

What a sensation!

People are drowning
in the Country of the Swimmers!

Now the travelers are sitting,
frustrated.

They have no visas from
The Country of the Brown Noses
into

The Really Big Bosses.

Hello! Aren't you a Pigeon?

Of course I am.

I'll be damned, we're countrymen!

Good-bye, Mother; so long, Father.

I'm leaving

for the Southwest

and a distant land,

The Empire

of beautiful

seventeen-year-old

girls.

Bella Akhmadulina

I SWEAR

I swear by this summer snapshot
of you, lonely as a gallows
braced on the porch of a stranger,
you were driven out of that house.
That crinkled satin dress
strangles your throat,
and you sit in our past, mute
to our hunger and grief.
It's too much for a beaten horse.

I swear by this picture, by the frail
sharp elbows as small as a child's
and by the long, drawn, dying smile
like an alibi for children.

I swear by the dark thrusts
wound in the airless griefs
and fevers of your poems,
that I, my throat bleeding,
will also cough and weep.
And I swear by this stolen image,
which I carry and never forget,
that you, a stranger, taboo,
are God's. He misses you.

I swear by your gaunt bones
crawling upon you like rat-teeth,
and by holy and blessed Russia
who forgets your deep asylum,
and by that bastard out of Africa
watching over the children,
and the children, by Tversky Boulevard,
and by the sad peace of a heaven
lacking profession and pain.

I'll kill your Yelabuga
and let the new grandchildren sleep,
even though the mothers of mothers
frighten them there in the evenings,
whispering, Yelabuga! She lives!

“Child, sleep; be still

Or the blind Yelabuga comes!"'
It is ready now! It's coming!
It is stumbling! Quickly, quickly!
And I bring down my boot with its nails
hard on its stretching fingers
and hard on its throat, and keep
the weight of my heel to its tip.

I swear by the children its blood
will burn my feet like green poison,
and I'll throw to this bottomless earth
the ripe green egg of its tail.
But not one word of that porch
where Marina, homeless, died!
And I swear, though our Yelabuga
should fix me with yellow eyes
and swear in the dark, in the stench
of swamps, by the toad of spring,
that it will kill me. I swear!

Andrei Voznesensky

SHAME

They have cut out our sense of shame
like an appendix.
We are doomed, shameless.
We are overcoming death, but who knows how
to blush for life?

These are the fibrillose membranes of our cheeks,
the soul's sense of touch,
a gift from God,
not ears and eyes.

When I go down
into the filthy lives of men

shame scorches my cheeks
like a flat iron.

Shame, how we hold our tongues,
or hem and haw.
I am ashamed
of some of my poems.

Lies on fat faces
should lie hidden in trousers.
But what of the shame
when the king of a country
pauses before taking off a shoe
and wonders,
“Which foot
did I wash yesterday?”

And now — it’s scandalous —
all the newspapers in Greece
look alike.
Vietnam becomes a pawn.
We lie and lie.

And what if we do eat fish
with a fork instead of a knife,
or eat
while others starve?

Oh, you intelligentsia,
you are caught in the toughening tissue of your lies,
reading Herzen
while stripping, bare-ass, for the lash.

*Aronov, Akhmadulina, and Voznesensky translated by Joseph
Langland (with Tamas Aczel and Lazlo Tikos). These poems
will appear in Poems From the Russian Underground to be
published in the fall by Harper & Row.*

Leo Braudy

BLUE TANGO

Let's see if we can come without touching.

— JEANNE (Maria Schneider) to PAUL (Marlon Brando)
in *Last Tango in Paris*

Perhaps no one except Dorian Gray was ever ruined by a book, and few good books are ruined by either good or bad reviews. But good movies are periodically ruined by overstated, trumpeting reviews that force any member of the audience to assume an aesthetic or cultural stance toward the film before he even sees it. We all have our favorite personal examples of the way the mere existence of expectation has warped or impeded the direct experience of a film. The case of Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* furnishes merely the clearest and most fascinating example yet of this aesthetically sterilizing process, both because the film itself is so worthy and because the effort to establish its value has absorbed so much time, money, and the stored capital of critical reputation.

Last Tango's first steps into the world were modest. When it appeared essentially unheralded on the last day of the New York Film Festival in October, it greatly moved much of its audience, who, without the need to call it a masterpiece or a classic, tried to convey its special qualities to their friends. But their reactions could not be quickly tested. *Last Tango* was not generally released in the United States until February 1973, and in the months between it has been treated or fallen victim to a critical and commercial advertising campaign, compounded of both cynicism and good will, that has insured for a long time to come that no one except a hermit could possibly muster an unpremeditated or unconditioned response to it.

Pauline Kael's *New Yorker* review defined all the terms of the *Last Tango* "controversy" and, with their usual sense of the publicity value of polemic, the other film reviewers responded, necessarily within or against Kael's first assertions. *Time* and *Newsweek* did cover stories respectively on Brando the star and Bertolucci the director. Pornography buffs leaped to compare *Last Tango* unfavorably with *Deep Throat* ("much less pretentious" sex scenes); Harry Reasoner and William F. Buckley, Jr., said *Newsweek*, denounced the film without having seen it; and in *The New Republic* Stanley Kauffmann with a melancholy wink reported that, when he revealed to a lecture audience that Brando's penis appeared neither in the cut nor the original version of the film, the women groaned. United Artists, the distributors of the film, picking up on both Kael's general praise ("Bertolucci and Brando have altered the face of an art form") and her emphasis on the film's sexual "breakthrough" ("the most powerfully erotic movie ever made"), launched an admirably schizoid advertising campaign prestigiously spreading Kael's review over two pages of *The New York Times* Sunday "Arts and Leisure" Section, while arranging interviews with Maria Schneider in which the main question seemed to be whether or not she and Brando were actually doing *it* either on or off the screen.

If we consider what *Last Tango* has become in the past few months, perhaps Kael was more prescient or more accurate than she knew when she opened her review by comparing its first showing to the premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* in 1913. Both works, she wrote, were "landmarks" in cultural history because *Last Tango* has "the same kind of hypnotic excitement as the *Sacre*, the same primitive force, and the same thrusting, jabbing eroticism." But the two works are really comparable, I would say, because both exist more as cultural events than as aesthetic experiences. The main difference is that the cultural floor-managing of *Last Tango* was carried on not by the artists and their audience, as was *Le Sacre*, but by the critics. Whatever her intent, Kael's review did not support the movie; it obliterated it. *Time* announced with obvious glee in the first paragraph of its story about *Last Tango*: "Debates about its meaning and merits are raging among critics, intellectuals, theologians, and editorial writers." Contemporary culture can define the value of art only as the accumulation of arguments about it. Why else does

Channel 13 — the New York educational television station — believe it is performing a public service by running an interview with Kael about the film followed by the gloomy choric disclaimers of Andrew Sarris, John Simon, and Richard Schickel? Oscar Wilde once wrote that controversy about a work of art indicated that it was new, complex, and vital. But most of the private arguments about *Last Tango* I have watched or participated in have been fairly desultory, despite Kael's belief that people will be arguing about it "for as long as there are movies." It's easier to argue about the critics than about the movie, easier to trade their prejudices than hazard a feeling or perception of one's own. *Last Tango* has become no longer Bertolucci's film but the creation of movie reviewers and cultural journalists who are constantly trying to convey through their overblown outrage about each other's opinions that they are involved in a serious aesthetic venture, requiring incredible risks and stamina, and occasionally intelligence and taste. They manufacture Cultural Events, establish Great Directors and Classic Films, to convince themselves of the worth of what they are doing and vary for us the week-to-week boredom of suffering again the same sensibility at the same stand.

Kael has said that she exaggerated purposefully about *Last Tango* because she believes part of her critical role is to overpraise works she thinks are merely good or very good so that the films will be distributed in something like their original versions and audiences will be moved to go see them. She has done similar service for *Bonnie and Clyde* and on a smaller scale for *Pretty Poison* — rescue operations on films she thought would have been lost without her. (Andrew Sarris helped revive Ophuls's *Lola Montes* with the same kind of benevolently intentioned hyperbole.) But why does a clearly worthwhile act of salvage, or a focus on neglected merit, have to be expressed in critical judgments that actually prevent us from understanding the film? Kael's exaggeration makes her like a godmother who smothers the baby by her caresses. What is the real difference between overpraising *Last Tango* to "save" it and mounting a meretricious advertising campaign that packs in audiences looking for a glimpse of Marlon Brando's penis? Neither allows the audience to encounter the film in a way best suited for full understanding. They both merely serve to get you into the theater to see it — "it" here being x-thousand feet of film stock — not a complex work of art, but,

once again, *An Event*. Both the hype of the distributor and the overpraise of the film critic condescend to the audience; the only difference is the nature of the goose to action. And don't both fit somewhere on the same continuum with the kind of decision poor maligned Bosley Crowther used to make, exaggerating his praise of say, *Cleopatra*, "for the good of the industry." Kael's taste is better, her instincts finer, and her intelligence more acute. But she has let her didactic impulses lead her astray, and as a result she warps the audience's ability to respond just as fully as lesser beings with less refined or more callous motives.

The treatment of *Last Tango* shows once again the ease with which films are made into commodities — critical, commercial, cultural — and the aesthetic damage that results. When individuals disagree about a film, as they often do, there is always a possibility that one or the other may not have connected with the combination of intellectual and emotional experience that forms the core of the film. From that sense of insufficiency can often issue a certain tentativeness, a respect for the different structures of another's experience, and a feeling, increasingly keen in light of recent films, that intellectual acuteness might require an emotionally complex response as well for full appreciation. Movies contain both emotional experience, the total effect, and intellectual experience, the need to found the emotional experience by explicating the interrelations of its elements. But because movies are so palpably *there*, we may tend to divert the emotion and destructively urge our minds to cannibalize the movies for their parts, even while claiming to serve a larger understanding. Over valuing a film to make sure people see it cuts off the potential for emotional connection and wholeness; it makes the film an object that contains a series of objects, and gives us only a commodity relation to the work. To decide, as film reviewers are always straining to, that a particular film is a classic, or the greatest ever, or the first, or the best, sprinkles the movie pages and the marquees with only the most obvious examples of the general urge of the film critic to pre-program the audience's response. Treating films as objects is the basic hazard of the film reviewer's occupation. Books, paintings, plays — all survive being talked about much more than movies. But when movies are overpraised, they turn out necessarily to underexist. To create the

cultural object, the film has been drained of emotional life and wholeness.

It is paradoxical that *Last Tango in Paris* should have had all this attention directed at its parts: are its sexy scenes sexy? are Brando's monologues heartfelt or phoney? is the scene beside his wife's coffin the best or the worst in the film? was it a mistake to show her face or a masterful stroke? Paradoxical because the real subject of *Last Tango* is the elusiveness of objects, images, and characters, the difficulty of making emotional connections, the elements of fraudulence and theatricality in everyone's attempt to create his identity for himself and for the world. In all his films Bertolucci seems drawn to a painter's way of presenting the things of the world — the Vuillard interiors of *The Conformist*, the Magritte-de-Chirico sense of the isolation of open spaces that permeates *Spider's Strategem*, the empty rooms filled with distorted figures that *Last Tango* draws from the works of Francis Bacon. Such painters convey an intimate, even voyeuristic, sense of the worlds they view at the same time that they emphasize the final mystery of the objects they show us — the bedspreads, the houses, the human bodies. They dramatize the inability of the artist — and Bertolucci's camera — to force these objects to yield their secrets. To take objects out of the film for interpretation (and find them wanting, as do Simon and Kauffmann, among others), or to disentangle the erotic scenes for praise or blame, ignores their meaning as part of the emotional lives of the characters to make them serve in the intellectual lives of the viewers. To emphasize with Kael "the new realism" of the film or "the terror of actual experience still alive on the screen" ignores Bertolucci's effort to convey the self-consciousness through which real things become reality rather than realism.

Both Jean Renoir and Roberto Rossellini use their films to convey the evasiveness and elusiveness of human character, the illusion of a "real" self, the basic irrelevance of psychological categories to full understanding. Bertolucci in *Last Tango* puts his own particular turn to this theme by using Brando's movie image to energize the inauthentic attempts to be authentic that are essential parts of the character Brando portrays. Everyone in *Last Tango* is cut off from everyone else, and yet each has some vision of the proper way to relate. Paul (Brando) thinks that by divesting himself of his past

(another favorite theme of Bertolucci's) he can strengthen his jellied ego. Jeanne (Maria Schneider) thinks she can split herself between the abasements of her relationship to Brando and the worship she gets from Tom (Jean-Pierre Léaud), a young filmmaker who is making a *cinéma vérité* film of her life as a prelude to their marriage. Léaud is Bertolucci's attack on the New Wave implication that all you have to do is follow someone long enough and ask the right questions and you'll understand him. (The sinking life preserver marked "L'Atalante" makes the satire more obvious.)

The "L'Atalante" reference is a false step, for Bertolucci isn't concerned with such explicit and separable images, but with the manipulation of self-image that his characters go through to shore themselves up in crisis. Bertolucci's critics behave like his characters, trying to take the sexual scenes out of context or trying to reduce each other to some psychic formulation that like Lady Brandon in *Dorian Gray* either explains people away or tells you everything about them except what you want to know. The psychological schema that ends with Schneider killing Brando as an amalgam of unknown rapist and resurrected father counterpoises Brando's desire at the beginning of the film not to see her as a problem, with a past susceptible to Freudian analysis; his refusal to ask any questions that by their desire for answers will limit his experience of her or of himself. Bertolucci's characters aren't looking for relation with others, love, for friendship, or for happiness. They are looking for salvation. And each is continually changing the nature of his particular salvation without telling anyone else. Paul's way is ultimately as cut off as either Jeanne's or Tom's. When she wants him to come without touching, he agrees to try. *Newsweek* calls that scene "the movie's one purely carefree encounter." It may be funny and seem carefree, but it's horrible at the same time — another example of the use of sexual power to avoid emotional connection. Neither Paul, with his obvious attempts to work up feelings he doesn't have, nor Jeanne, with her inability to connect her lives with Paul and Tom, can marry emotion with action, either through violence or tenderness.

Is the search for salvation through cultural experience any less deluded than the search for salvation through sexual experience that *Last Tango* so clearly anatomizes? Pauline Kael calls the sexual relationships in *Last Tango* a breakthrough. She said a similar thing

about the obscene dialogue in *M.A.S.H.* She obviously considers artistic innovation in film to occur principally in subject matter — plot and dialogue. Fair enough; Lawrence is as important a creative artist as Joyce, as far as literary history goes. Yet the true role of the sexuality in *Last Tango* is the way the characters make it up and manipulate it, not its realism, or its implicit statement against censorship. “Breakthrough” is an oddly contrary word to use about a film preoccupied with characters who desire for themselves and others an impossible purity and self-sufficiency, and who use their sexual natures to confirm and strengthen their separations from each other.

I liked *Last Tango* when I saw it, and I find it even more interesting to think and talk about a few weeks later. Even though I had tried to read as little of the “controversy” material as possible, my first viewing of it was still poisoned by the atmosphere. But now the dialogue can steep, the images can return, and the film reform itself as an experience rather than an event. So many recent films — *Last Tango*, *Cries and Whispers*, *Chloe in the Afternoon* — make make demands on a combination of our intellectual and emotional sympathy as viewers that are not unique but are certainly different in degree from what we are used to in movies. More than any other art, movies are tentative forms for the emotions of the audience, forms that entrap you and relieve you of the self-consciousness of being an audience, of being separate. In films like those I’ve just mentioned, we are asked to involve ourselves in the partialities of the characters and seek out their mystery in our own uncertainties. This kind of emotional openness to the characters of a film is the first victim of critical overkill and impossibly heightened expectations. The richness of *Last Tango* is to show how human separations occur in the head, no matter how clothed, naked, apart or connected the body. Its strength is not in its sexual explicitness, its system of symbols, or its scheme of characters, but in the insufficiency of those orders to explain finally what is going on.

Paul Zweig

MAKING AND UNMAKING

I

James Wright's achievement has been solidly recognized. Last year, his *Collected Poems* won the Pulitzer Prize. But long before that, Wright had been acknowledged by a generation of poets as the artisan of a new language for poetry: a style of pastoral surrealism, built around strong images and a simple spoken rhetoric. Wright's art lay not in complex grammar, but in a stark structure of perceptions which became their own statement. The poems created a vision of elusive landscapes, as if the poet did not see the same world we saw:

*The moon drops one or two feathers into the field.
The dark wheat listens.
Be still.
Now.
There they are, the moon's young, trying
Their wings.
Between trees, a slender woman lifts up the lovely shadow
Of her face, and snow she steps into the air, now she is gone
Wholly into the air.
I stand alone by an elder tree, I do not dare breathe
Or move.
I listen.
The wheat leans back toward its own darkness,
And I lean toward mine.*

— "Beginning"

The poem is so completely visual that it seems unilateral: concealed by the standing wheat, the poet waits for the night-shapes to come, ghostlike and feathered, accompanied by "a slender woman," who is the moon. The scene is evoked with the straightforwardness of a

fairytale, and what it means can hardly be rephrased: a sense of the quietness which events can never touch, a meeting of the wheat's darkness and the darkness within.

The Branch Will Not Break was one of the key books of the early 1960s. Wright's imagery possessed a visionary quality which many poets felt to be an alternative to the elaborate, formal rhetoric of Wilbur and Lowell. Lines like the following triggered off waves of response:

*Tonight,
The cancerous ghosts of old con men
Shed their leaves.*

— "Two Poems About President Harding"

*Women are dancing around a fire
By a pond of cresosote and waste water from the river
In the dank fog of Ohio.
They are dead.
I am alone here,
And I reach for the moon that dangles
Cold on a dark vine.*

— "Message Hidden in an Empty Wine Bottle . . ."

*This time, I have left my body behind me, crying
In its dark thorns.
Still,
There are good things in this world.
It is dusk.
It is the good darkness
Of women's hands that touch dark loaves.
The spirit of a tree begins to move.
I touch leaves.
I close my eyes, and think of water.*

— "Trying to Pray"

The mingling of pastoral with Gothic mystery recalls Roethke, but in a tighter, more contained manner. One senses the influence of Wright's work as a translator. The German poet Georg Trakl seems especially to have helped Wright to reshape his language toward the somber simplicity of these lines. Along with Robert Bly, Wright was in part responsible for popularizing poets like Trakl, Vallejo, and Neruda in America. At a time when American poets were casting about for new models, he was able to give an example of how poets

foreign to English or American tradition could help us to establish new modes of language.

Wright's visionary landscapes were anchored in the American scene by a litany of place-names. But it is a spiritualized America, haunted by drunks, lost children, and dead Indians; an America short-circuited by despair, whose very forms breathe sleepily with the rhythms of nightmare:

*Somewhere in a vein of Bridgeport, Ohio;
Deep in a coal hill behind Hanna's name;
Below the tipples, and dark as a drowsy woodchuck;
A man, alone,
Stumbles upon the outside locks of a grave, whispering
Oh let me in.*

— "Miners"

Wright managed to bring into a single focus his vision of the ghosts in the land and the ghosts in the mind. He proposed a new connection between feelings and events; a pantheism of suffering which illuminated the inward and outward spaces alike. The miner stumbling in a dark tunnel in Bridgeport, Ohio, is stumbling in the closed spaces of the psyche; he inhabits the underworld of America, and the poet's buried self. In Wright's vision, the two are one.

The attempt to create a new religious idiom is underscored by the title of Wright's next book, *Shall We Gather At The River*. The title has a chilling irony in Wright's work. One imagines a group of hymn-singing settlers intimidated by the emptiness of the Midwestern sky, and the vast spaces of land stretching around them. They huddle together, and sing "shall we gather at the river." Their hymn is also a prayer, and there is defiance in their voices, for they believe that God is listening. In Wright's prayer-poems, the hymn is launched sadly, because there is no one listening. The title *Shall We Gather At The River* contains a genuine question. Perhaps it is no use to huddle together and sing. Perhaps (to quote Cesar Vallejo) "God is sick," or perhaps He is an alien presence, "a red spider," as Wright says. James Wright is haunted by "loneliness," by a wish to gather at the river in a community of singing, although he knows that such a gathering must fail.

By collecting his work into a single volume, a poet invites a different sort of reading than he has received previously. Poems ten

and twenty years old are offered once more, not as experimental statements, but as works whose impact of surprise is long past, works that must now stand on their own, as they will stand in future anthologies. James Wright's *Collected Poems* surprised me in two ways. I was startled to see how dated his early poems now seem. *The Green Wall* (1957) and *Saint Judas* (1959) are written in the stilted pre-Raphaelite style that was fashionable in the 1950s. Aside from an occasional line, in which Wright's gift for stark imagery makes itself felt, these poems are disappointing today, and I think it was a mistake to include so many of them in the present volume. Wright's early language was so thickly idealized, the poems were so elevated that one can only guess at the core of hurt and passion which they suggest. Wright's cast of lost children, drunks, and the suffering poor present, but is blurred by inflated rhetoric. The fact is that Wright never mastered the formal style of the 1950s, as Wilbur and Lowell did. When he broke free of it, to write *The Branch Will Not Break*, he shucked off a skin that had never fit.

On the other hand, I was surprised, too, at how uneven *The Branch Will Not Break* and *Shall We Gather At The River* now seem, as volumes, although each contains a number of remarkable poems. Wright helped to create a new poetic language, but he himself was able to use it perfectly only now and then. All too often, his poems founder in repetitious imagery. The word "dark," for example, appears in almost every poem, as a code word for mystery and the spiritual unknown. It is not long before "dark" becomes what Raymond Queneau called a *mot valise*, a suitcase word: open it up, and toss in whatever comes to hand. Instead of sharpening perceptions, the *mot valise* confuses them, and it is not long before the word itself dies of vagueness.

The poems are haunted by preciosity, a hold-over from Wright's earlier books, disguised here as a mode of surrealism. The short poem, "Spring Images," is an example:

*Two athletes
Are dancing in the cathedral
Of the wind.*

*A butterfly lights on the branch
Of your green voice.*

*Small antelopes
Fall asleep in the ashes
Of the moon.*

The images are insubstantial, exaggeratedly delicate. Instead of suggesting the shamanistic depths of surrealism, they resemble images in a *toile de jouy*, more decorative than mysterious.

Another problem in the poems is closer to the nature of Wright's achievement as a poet. He is so wary of the strictures of traditional poetry, so determined to bring his language as close as possible to the simplicity of emotional statement, that an air of oversimplification and clumsiness is often felt as in lines like these:

*Many animals that our fathers killed in America
Had quick eyes.
They stared about wildly,
When the moon went dark.
The new moon falls into the freight yards
Of cities in the south,
But the loss of the moon to the dark hands of Chicago
Does not matter to the deer
In this northern field.*

— "Fear Is What Quickens Me"

There is a puzzling contrast, in such passages, between the firm structure of images, and the lumbering simplicity of the language which reads almost like a translation from Spanish or German.

Wright is very much a poet of the 1960s. His work is central to the experimental tradition of those years. A dozen or more of his poems must be ranked among the most beautiful to be written during the past decade. "Lying in a Hammock At William Duffy's Farm," "As I Step Over a Puddle," "A Blessing," "The Minneapolis Poem," "In Memory Of Leopardi," "To The Poets In New York," and especially the unbearably painful, haunting poem, "To The Muse," are my partial anthology of Wright's best poems. Like other poets of the period, he has so far given us a scattering of fine poems, but no sustained work in which the governing vision and the artistic achievement are adequate to each other.

II

The fortunes of reputation are strange. For thirty years, George Oppen received the highest praise from men like Ezra Pound and

William Carlos Williams, yet his work was virtually unknown, even among poets. The fashions came and went. Proletarian poetry in the 1930s and 40s; bland rhetorical poetry in the 1950s; imagist surreal poetry in the 1960s. At long intervals, Oppen published volumes of difficult, tightly written poems: four volumes in thirty years. Not a prolific writer, not a representative of familiar fashions or schools. Even the free-wheeling tastes of the 1960s seemed not to affect George Oppen's isolation. Then in 1969, to the general surprise, George Oppen's newest volume, *Of Being Numerous*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, a tribute not to one book but to a lifetime of achievement in poetry.

Oppen is not an easy poet to read. His poems are tightly wrought meditations which do not so much define as surround their subject with tentative thrusts of meaning. Abstractions and carefully observed details mingle to produce a line that is almost sculptural in its precision:

*. . . is it not
In fear the roots grip
Downward
And beget
The baffling hierarchies
Of father and child
As of leaves on their high
Thin twigs to shield us
From time, from open
Time*

— "Of Being Numerous"

Oppen's short open stanzas are reminiscent of William Carlos Williams. The words are exposed by their simplicity, so that Oppen's image of "baffling hierarchies" transfixes us with beautiful surprise. The idea that birth-giving defends against the fear of time, that fear plunging like a root nourishes the delicacy of leaves, is expressed with the utter reserve of words adequate to their meaning.

Most of Oppen's recent book is devoted to a long meditative poem in forty parts, entitled "Of Being Numerous." It contains some of the finest poetry Oppen has written, and presents a difficult challenge to the reader, for the poem proceeds by side leaps and deft

associations. Single words are caught up from a preceding stanza, and expanded into a constellation of images. Sharply evoked cityscapes issue into elusive statements of feeling or philosophy. The movement of the poem suggests the rigor of musical form, although I am not sure the structure of the poem as a whole is as strict as my comparison makes it seem.

"Of Being Numerous," is essentially a meditation on the city. It explores the perpetual newness and sameness of lives along sidewalks, in tenements. Above all, it describes the challenge to the singular self, presented by the "many," huddled together through sheer number. Oppen explores the precariousness of the solitary mind, its "shipwreck" in the massed movements of the urban world:

*Obsessed, bewildered
By the shipwreck
Of the singular
We have chosen the meaning
Of being numerous.*

The poem moves between two shadowy figures who organize its themes: Kierkegaard, the lonely street-wanderer, who dramatized the "shipwreck" of the singular self; Walt Whitman, that other street-wanderer, whose self became a community of all the selves, a transparent city of the spirit. These two figures are the limits within which the poem's meditations probe and develop. The whole of stanza sixteen is a quote from Kierkegaard, while the final stanza is a prose quote from Whitman, the two representing opposite illuminations: one the illumination of loneliness, what Oppen calls "the bright light of shipwreck," and the other the illumination of community, the sunlit oneness of buildings. It is interesting that neither limiting statement is in Oppen's words. Statement lies outside the delicate structure of Oppen's style. Statement is a boundary line, a landmark. The poem itself has the elusiveness of growth and pure movement.

Another figure stands closer to the center of Oppen's meditation:

*We are pressed, pressed on each other,
We will be told at once
Of anything that happens*

*And the discovery of fact bursts
In a paroxysm of emotion
Now as always. Crusoe*

*We say was
"Rescued."
So we have chosen.*

— "Of Being Numerous"

Oppen suggests that Crusoe's shipwreck was a victory. That we have comforted ourselves by declaring him "rescued." Shipwreck may be a disaster, but, in Oppen's words, it creates a "bright light." Crusoe is a hero in loneliness, not in rescue. Crusoe, for Oppen, is the perceiver and the poet who knows that strong experience requires separateness, that seeing isolates:

*"Whether, as the intensity of seeing increases, one's distance
from Them, the people, does not also increase"
I know, of course, I know, I can enter no other place*

*Yet I am one of those who from nothing but man's way of
thought and one of his dialects and what has happened
to me
Have made poetry*

*To dream of that beach
For the sake of an instant in the eyes,*

The absolute singular

*The unearthly bonds
Of the singular*

Which is the bright light of shipwreck

— "Of Being Numerous"

"Being Numerous," represents Whitman's hope, but also the deadness of brutal lives and frayed selves. Poetry is the language of identity. It results from Crusoe's disaster, which we have never understood as a mode of urban heroism.

These remarks are far from exhaustive. "Of Being Numerous," is a complex poem, which requires the sort of exploratory reading and rereading that Wallace Stevens's and T. S. Eliot's poetry demanded. Ideas are presented not only to be understood, but to be experienced suggestively, musically, so to speak. It is, I think, Oppen's major achievement to date, and one of the most important single poems to be written in recent years.

III

I can think of no stronger evidence for the death of storytelling than Anne Sexton's attempt to rewrite Grimm's fairytales into poetry. It has been a long time since poems — or "serious" novels — have told stories. John G. Nichardt's verse epics of the West are more folklore than literature. Last year's attempt by George Keithly to write into poetry the story of the Donner Expedition was a predictable failure. Anne Sexton does no better; in fact, if possible, she does worse, because the reader can refer all too easily to Grimm's original tales, with their mythic simplicity and their barbarous cruelties. Anne Sexton has managed to reduce Grimm's stories to the level of anecdotes told in a thin, flat style. Whatever actual poetry there is in the volume is contained in the lyrical prefaces which Miss Sexton has appended to her tales. Patches of lively language occur here and there, as in the preface to "Rumpelstiltskin":

*He is a monster of despair.
He is all decay.
He speaks up as tiny as an earphone
with Truman's asexual voice:
I am your dwarf.
I am the enemy within.
I am the boss of your dreams.
No. I am not the law in your mind.
the grandfather of watchfulness.
I am the law of your members,
the kindred of blackness and impulse.*

It is a shame that Anne Sexton could not get as excited about the stories themselves. Mere quoting can give only a small idea of the repetitiousness of her language which resembles nothing so much as bad prose chopped haphazardly into lengths. Attempting to reproduce the simplicity of Grimm's tales, Sexton has neglected their magic, so that her stories appear hurried, lacking in concentration. Here is the beginning of "The Little Peasant":

*Long ago
there was a peasant
who was poor but crafty.
He was not yet a voyeur.
He had yet to find
the miller's wife
at her game.*

*Now he had not enough
cabbage for supper
nor clover for his one cow.
So he slaughtered the cow
and took the skin
to town.
It was worth no more
than a dead fly
but he hoped for profit.*

The language here is so gray that one cannot work up an interest in Sexton's crafty peasant who goes jerkily to his fate like a windup toy.

As if to disguise the thinness of her storytelling, Sexton intrudes endless numbers of mod images into the narrative. Here is a passage from "Iron Hans," a story about an ugly forest spirit who is transformed into a king:

*At the wedding feast
the music stopped suddenly
and a door flew open
and a proud king walked in
and embraced the boy.
Of course
it was Iron Hans.
He had been bewitched
and the boy had broken the spell.
He who slays the warrior
and captures the maiden's heart
undoes the spell.
He who kills his father
and thrice wins his mother
undoes the spell.*

*Without Thorazine
or benefit of psychotherapy
Iron Hans was transformed.
No need for Master Medical;
no need for electroshock —
merely bewitched all along.
Just as the frog who was a prince.
Just as the madman his simple boyhood.*

This sort of language so thoroughly deflates an already flaccid climax, that the tale drains away before it has ended.

Anne Sexton's stories are filled with hearts like "blackjacks," a boy performing "like Joe Dimaggio," days "as dark as the Führer's

headquarters," princesses who "danced like taxi girls at Roseland," or who "fussed around like a Miss America contest." These images are so external to the development of the stories that Sexton must resort to scotch tape to make them stick, tagging them with neat comparatives: "like," seasoned occasionally with "as," or "in the manner of."

Instead of *Transformations*, "Reductions" would be a better title, for that is the effect Anne Sexton achieves with her litany of "now" images. Instead of updating, she impoverishes Grimm's marvelous stories, giving us not more, but painfully less.

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BOOKS

THE MADDING CROWD

WOMEN AND MADNESS by Phyllis Chesler. Doubleday. \$8.95.

I speak in many voices throughout this book: as a psychological researcher, theoretician, and clinician —and as a literary and philosophical person, a lover of poetry and myths. — PHYLLIS CHESLER

A lover of myths, Dr. Chesler has contrived a few. The first of her mythological treatments is a retelling of the story of Demeter, to whom Chesler assigns four daughters, Persephone, Psyche, Athena, and Artemis. "To amuse their mother — with whom they were all passionately in love — they invented language, music, laughter — and many more useful and boisterous activities." In the current fates of Demeter and her daughters, Chesler proposes to discover the models of contemporary female psychology. The wise and skillful Athena and her sister Artemis, "the founder of Amazon cities," have virtually disappeared from the earth. When they do appear they are caught in acts of violence. Persephone and Psyche are very much with us, representing, along with Virgin Mary, Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty, the prototypical female. Persephone-Psyche-Cinderella is the embodiment of female traits: self-hatred, anxiety, naiveté, romantic heterosexuality, pride in childbearing, compassion and conservative fearfulness. Chesler further proposes that so long as women act out this syndrome of their devalued sex-role stereotype, they will continue to be dominated, raped, labelled as mad, become chronic psychiatric patients, and be locked away in mental hospitals.

There is, however, one Persephone-Psyche-Cinderella trait that Chesler pins her hopes on. In the female mindlessness and superficiality that is "neither mindless nor superficial," she locates the dialogue between women. There is a "... retelling of the entire experience in which their feelings are embedded . . .," a monologue that seems to go nowhere with a sensitive matching of pauses, sighs, and unrelated responses that allows female thinking to achieve emotional reality. Chesler also recognizes in this special thought process, "the basic tool of art and psychic awareness."

Indeed, it is a simple matter to recognize that in *Women and Madness*, we are once again being served up the prototypical female monologue. The book is a ladies-magazine smorgasbord of Demeter, Sylvia Plath, the penis-envy paragraphs of Freud, the usual bits from Reich, Laing, and Cooper, photographs of Athenian pottery, of paintings by Raphael, Rossetti, and Fra Bartolommeo, of the sculpture of a wounded Amazon, a few charts and tables, some poetry and writing of the women's liberation movement, and the words of women patients interviewed by Chesler. Chesler has actually *written* only a portion of this 333 page book. There is a poem of hers, "Something Borrowed, Something Blue," and a sampler of asides, pauses, and sighs in the galaxy of footnotes: "Men are often victims of nature, but women *are* 'nature.'" "I really wonder what a group of Amazon women would make of my *writing* about them?" "Promiscuity, like 'frigidity' is both a 'female' and a 'non-female' trait: either can mean a flight into or a flight from 'femininity.'"

Thus, even those who have come forth to praise *Women and Madness* we are once again being served up the prototypical female monologue as a personal document, "a passionate essay." Why should a woman, with the intellectual and philosophical aspirations which Chesler lays claim to, have decided to speak out to the world in the voice of Cinderella? Surely, as a student of Language and Literature at Bard College, she must have been exposed to the inseparable relationship between form and content, emotional and intellectual truth? Chesler herself says, "Women must be able to go as directly to the 'heart' of physical, technological, and intellectual reality as they presumably do to the heart of emotional reality. This requires discipline, courage, confidence, anger, the ability to act, and an overwhelming sense of joy and urgency." Alas, *Women and Madness* is hardly an act of courage, confidence, and joy. Such qualities of thought cannot survive her strident quest to redo the world in an image comfortable to her own needs and personal salvation. The book is rather an advertisement for Pollyannaish optimism and *chutzpah*. Chesler has not yet learned to respect her own observation that the ability to act requires emotional and intellectual discipline.

As psychological researcher, theoretician, and clinician, Chesler devises antidotes for the clinical and diagnostic monstrosities of the psychiatric profession that are themselves an expression of a naive and outdated conception of the human mind. Chesler's "theoretical proposal" has it that, "What we consider 'madness' whether it appears in women or in men is either the acting-out of the devalued female role or the total or partial rejection of one's sex-role stereotype." "Female diseases" are merely the reflection of the self-destructive, turning-aggression-toward-

the-self attitudes that have been inculcated in women in a male dominated society. Among these diseases are psychoneurosis, phobias, manic-depression, schizophrenia, and paranoia. "Male diseases" are, on the other hand, an expression of self-indulgence and destructive hostility toward others, i.e., alcohol addiction, alcohol intoxication, drug addiction, and personality disorders. As further evidence of the successful self-indulgence of men and the essentially self-destructive attitudes of women, Chesler cites the fact that more men than women are able to commit successful suicides — women merely tend to attempt suicide.

The statistical analysis on which this theorizing hinges is of the most simplistic and superficial variety — the counting of heads. Furthermore, a study of the appendix and an examination of the charts and tables that appear there reveal that Chesler chose statistics that would "pick up female patients," that she ignores in her computations her observations that women comprise 53 percent of the population and that they live longer than men. Also, some of the charts are merely constructions from NIMH reference tables. Those that are not indicate that it is the nonwhite male and nonwhite female population that dominate the psychiatric facilities of this country. Three of the charts are essentially identical except for a shifting of dates — as if mere repetition were argument. It may well be that there are more female than male mental patients, but Chesler's statistics do not inspire confidence nor invite serious interpretation.

To compound matters, Chesler, in her psychological reasoning, has adopted the typical symptom-oriented biases of the psychiatric profession she imagines herself to be rebelling against. Her discussions of the female and male diseases makes it all too clear that Chesler knows no better than the run-of-the-mill psychiatrist or psychologist how to go about dissecting and analyzing the subtle relationships between presenting symptom and underlying personality organization. She is unaware that neurotic symptoms may be part of any number of personality constellations, that depressions are best understood in terms of types and levels of narcissistic regulations, and that depressions involve shifts of aggression between internal self and object representations (not between self and actual others, as Chesler would have it). Chesler's whole notion of the differences between male and female diseases boils down to a residue of the commonsensical. For example, Chesler thinks that if women could externalize rather than internalize their rage and resentment, they would be less neurotic and more fulfilled. There is no clinical truth to this whatsoever. Externalization is, in fact, a typical evasion of conflict. As such

it obstructs and postpones the possibility of advancing and restructuring personal destiny.

Chesler is an associate of the Feminist Therapy Collective. The current feminist approach to the treatment of women focuses on issues of rage, depression, and aggression. "I'm getting a hundred letters a week," says Dr. Chesler in *The New York Times* of December 27, 1972. "It is clear that for educated, middle-class women, the therapist no longer must be a male authority figure — as God was once a man. . . ." The abandonment of her Third World sisters is evident. And in this they may be thankful. She may have been offered it, but Chesler has not availed herself of the education or training that would enable her to comprehend the *meanings* of rage, aggression, or depression in anyone.

Women and Madness has won the sympathies of many feminists. Even those who do not really respect Chesler have gone on to patronize her because she appears to have taken the ultimate radical stance, particularly with regard to bisexuality, lesbianism, and her definitive rejection of maleness. However, most should be able to see that beneath Chesler's Amazon breast beats the heart of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm. At this point in the feminist movement *esprit de corps* must no longer interfere with self-critical reflection. We might do well to heed Camus's 1957 observations on the conformity of the left. The movement, he writes:

. . . needs doctoring through pitiless self-criticism, exercise of the heart, close reasoning, and a little modesty. Until such an effort at reexamination is well under way, any rallying will be useless and even harmful. Meanwhile, the intellectual's role will be to say that the king is naked when he is, and not to go into raptures over his imaginary trappings.

So, let's put away the fairy tales and get on with it.

Louise J. Kaplan

THE NEW OLD SOUTHERN NOVEL

THE RIVER TO PICKLE BEACH. By Doris Betts. Harper and Row. \$7.95.

THE GOSPEL SINGER. By Harry Crews. Morrow. \$5.95. {out of print}

CAR. By Harry Crews. Morrow. \$5.95.

STAY HUNGRY. By Charles Gaines. Doubleday. \$5.95.

A CRY OF ABSENCE. By Madison Jones. Crown. \$1.25.

OUTER DARK. By Cormac McCarthy. Random House. \$6.95.

THE COMPLETE STORIES. By Flannery O'Connor. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$10.00.

LOVE IN THE RUINS. By Walker Percy. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$7.95.

A LONG AND HAPPY LIFE. By Reynolds Price. Atheneum. \$4.95.

PERMANENT ERRORS. By Reynolds Price. Atheneum. \$6.50.

THE COLLECTED STORIES. By Peter Taylor. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$10.00.

LOSING BATTLES. By Eudora Welty. Random House. \$1.25.

THE OPTIMIST'S DAUGHTER. By Eudora Welty. Random House. \$5.95.

JOINER. By James Whitehead. Knopf. \$7.95.

ETERNAL FIRE. By Calder Willingham. Vanguard. \$6.95.

In this peaceful land, pretty birds sing and the woodbine twines. Violets and forgot-me-nots bloom in the meadow. The wind is soft as a baby's smile, and as warm and gentle as mother love. Only an occasional random tornado moils the scene and disrupts nature. True, the summer sun is a fiery furnace; it boils the blood, cooks the brain, and spreads a fever in the bones. But that same fearful orb, in collaboration with the sweet rain generated by its power, makes the little flowers grow. — CALDER WIL-
LINGHAM, *Eternal Fire*

The point was not widely remarked upon in 1962, when *Eternal Fire* appeared, but with that paragraph and the more than six hundred sprawling pages that followed, Calder Willingham marked a turning point in the fiction of the American South. That may seem

an extravagant claim for a novel generally dismissed as a slick pot-pourri of overheated sex and grotesque violence, but there is more to *Eternal Fire*. As its first paragraph suggests, the novel assembled all the conventions and clichés of Southern Gothic, exaggerated them to outlandish dimensions, and roasted them to a fare-thee-well. *Eternal Fire* did to the "Southern novel" what *Portnoy's Complaint* did to the "Jewish novel:" it subjected a once-distinguished but withering literary tradition to merciless, devastating parody. At the same time, it implicitly raised the question: What comes next?

The question, which has concerned serious Southern writers for quite a while, reflects the gradual disappearance of "the South" itself, a change of which Flannery O'Connor wrote: "The anguish that most of us have observed for some time now has been caused not by the fact that the South is alienated from the rest of the country, but by the fact that it is not alienated enough, that every day we are getting more and more like the rest of the country, that we are being forced out not only of our many sins, but of our few virtues." Those "few virtues" formed the bedrock upon which rested the great Southern fiction of the quarter century following the 1929 publication of Faulkner's first Yoknapatawpha novel, *Sartoris*. They took different forms in the hands of different novelists (and poets, essayists, and historians), but they can be summed up in three "senses:" of place, of community, of history.

The distinction between place and community is narrow, and indeed the two are interdependent: the one is physical space and climate, the other is the people who inhabit it. In the South that Faulkner's generation knew, place had a meaning foreign to most other Americans. People were born, lived and died in one place; they had what Eudora Welty has called "the blessing of being located — contained," and they were contained within a land and climate that colored the patterns of their lives and minds. The murky red clay, the heavy vegetation, the burning heat, the heavy rains — all were inescapable. The physical environment was part of the psychological landscape.

The life of the Southern town and countryside was a web of enduring, intimate human relationships. In a brilliant discussion of the Southern novelists, C. Vann Woodward has pointed to "their way of treating man not as an individual alone with his conscience or his God, as the New Englanders were inclined to do, or alone at sea with a whale or a marlin, or alone in a ring with a bull, but as an inextricable part of a living history and community, attached and determined in a thousand ways by other wills and destinies he has only heard about." In the best of the Southern novels, the community itself is a character;

Yoknapatawpha is not merely a county, not merely a physical place, but a tangle of human "connections" in which Compsons, Benbows, McCaslins, and Snopses are caught.

Looming over this Southern community in the first decades of the century was the unavoidable presence of the Southern past. In no American fiction does history play so large a part as in that of the South, for in no other region has history's burden been so heavy: the burden of defeat, the burden of guilt over slavery. The Southern writers of Faulkner's day knew the past as a daily presence; Woodward quotes Katherine Anne Porter, "I am a grandchild of a lost War, and I have blood-knowledge of what life can be in a defeated country on the bare bones of privation." Ten years ago Flannery O'Connor wrote: "When Walker Percy won the National Book Award, newsmen asked him why there were so many good Southern writers and he said, 'Because we lost the War.' He didn't mean by that simply that a lost war makes good subject matter. What he was saying was that we have had our Fall. We have gone into the modern world with an inburnt knowledge of human limitations and with a sense of mystery which could not have developed in our first state of innocence — as it has not sufficiently developed in the rest of the country."

Faulkner, in his greatest novels, dealt directly with the Southern past: *Light in August*, *Absalom! Absalom!*, *Go Down, Moses*, all are concerned in various ways with the agony of defeat and the legacy of racism. In Miss O'Connor's fiction, the theme of suffering takes more intimate forms. As epigraph for one of her books she took a quotation from St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "The dragon sits by the side of the road, watching those who pass. Beware lest he devour you. We go to the Father of Souls, but it is necessary to pass by the dragon." The passage could well have been published again in her *Complete Stories*, the posthumous collection which summarizes her career.

The place of Miss O'Connor's stories is her own rural and small-town Georgia, a hard and scraggly land; the community is formed by the farmers and salesmen and poor Negroes and old ladies who inhabit it. In her finest stories — "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "The Artificial Nigger," "The Lame Shall Enter First" — she forces these insignificant little people to pass the dragon, to encounter evil and suffering and out of the encounter to acquire knowledge and humility: "Mr. Head stood very still and felt the action of mercy touch him again but this time he knew that there were no words in the world that could name it. He understood that it grew out of agony, which is not denied to any man and which is given in strange ways to children. . . . He

saw that no sin was too monstrous for him to claim as his own, and since God loved in proportion as He forgave, he felt ready at that instant to enter Paradise." The interaction of Miss O'Connor's vigorous Catholicism with the Southern situation sets her apart, but her consciousness of violence, pain, endurance, and redemption places her squarely in the center of the Southern tradition. Only Faulkner — of whom she once said, "The presence alone of Faulkner in our midst makes a great difference in what the writer can and cannot permit himself to do. Nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the Dixie Limited is roaring down" — ranks higher.

Of those writers who are still living and have made major contributions to the Southern tradition, two — Eudora Welty and Peter Taylor — are working at the height of their artistry. Robert Penn Warren, Katherine Anne Porter, and Erskine Caldwell have long since passed their peaks; Miss Welty and Taylor are the last authentic practitioners of the tradition.

The historical theme is less important in their work than place and community. Miss Welty's latest novels, *Losing Battles* and *The Optimist's Daughter*, and Taylor's *Collected Stories* concern themselves largely with that most fundamental of Southern communities, the family. In *Losing Battles*, a Mississippi hill family gathers in ritualistic celebration of a grandmother's 90th birthday; in *The Optimist's Daughter*, a middle-aged woman who has left Mississippi returns to find her father dying and the last bonds of family dissolving; in Taylor's stories, various families of Memphis and western Tennessee strive "to keep up the family ties," some succeeding and some failing. Similarities between Miss Welty and Taylor should not be made too much of, but one passage from *Losing Battles* comes close to characterizing their work:

The tree looked a veteran of all the old blows, a survivor. Old wounds on the main trunk had healed leaving scars as big as tubs or wagon wheels, and where the big lower branches had thrust out, layer under layer of living bark had split on the main trunk in a bloom of splinters, of a red nearly animal-like.

"Too late to pull it up now," said Granny, looking from one face to another, all around the table.

It would be difficult to find a passage that more succinctly describes the Southern themes: the tree, representing both the rootedness of place and the dignity of survival against harsh odds; the family, rooted like the tree, gathered nearby in community.

It would be no less difficult to find today a place in the South where a scene such as that could occur. There are still a few isolated pockets of the "old" South, a few places where community life remains self-contained, but television and the interstates are rapidly eliminating them. More and more, the South is assuming the rest of the country's rootlessness and facelessness. Not long ago the South was a state of mind, and its literature uniquely reflected that. Now it is becoming a clutter of McDonaldburgers and Holiday Inns and Radio Shacks and A&P WEO's and Easy Exit-Easy Return gas stations and French Provincial, Ye Olde Williamsburg apartment sprawls — and what does the Southern writer say about *that*?

The problem for the younger Southern writers is that they feel themselves heirs to the regional tradition, yet the South in which they have come of age bears little resemblance to the South in which the tradition was established. All too many of them are stuck on the track with their mules and wagons while Faulkner's Dixie Limited roars down on them: entranced by their literary forebears, they are writing what Miss O'Connor called "phony-Southern," parodies as unconscious as Willingham's was conscious. The creative writing schools (which are flourishing in the South as never before) are filled with earnest young Faulkners and O'Connors, churning out dense sentences and grotesque tales that draw not a whit on personal experience but reek of "the South."

The serious writers recognize this pitfall and are trying to figure out how to avoid it — how to write about the South, that is, but about *their* South. Among them (the list could be longer) are Reynolds Price, Harry Crews, Doris Betts, Madison Jones, Cormac McCarthy, James Whitehead, Charles Gaines, and Walker Percy. As a group they defy generalization, save that they are looking at the new South with a sensitive awareness of the old, and attempting to find what threads of continuity may exist.

Price and Crews could not be more different, but they share a common experience: they have had their fling with the old forms, they have abandoned them, and they are struggling to find their own voices. Price made a great success with his first novel, *A Long and Happy Life*, which is Southern, rural, charming, funny — and imitative. Since then he has been moving progressively inward, making his interior life the chief preoccupation of his fiction. *Permanent Errors*, his latest collection of stories and reflections, is a thoughtful and in certain respects courageous piece of work, for it is a candid exercise in public self-scrutiny. But ultimately its self-preoccupation is narcissistic and its prose

is muggy. If the folksy ramblings of his first novel are not Price's true milieu, neither is the convoluted introspection in which he has lately been engaged. He is a writer of great intelligence and generous spirit, but he has not found his subject.

Harry Crews, on the other hand, has found his subject but is mishandling it. Like Price, he began with an admirable but derivative first novel: *The Gospel Singer*, a highly Gothic treatment of Bible Belt piety and hypocrisy. Since then he has been applying to the vulgarization of the South a superb talent for black humor. In *Car*, his strengths and weaknesses are equally on display. The idea is marvellous: the son of a Jacksonville, Florida, used-car dealer decides to consume a Ford Maverick, morsel by morsel. Crews inflates the situation into an enormously funny and knowing spoof of America's infatuation with the automobile — an infatuation that borders on obsession in the South — and then, inexplicably, turns the novel's toughness into flab with a weak and sentimental conclusion. That has been the pattern of his recent fiction: rich satire at the outset, sloppy and evasive resolution at the end. It is as though, having amused and even shocked the reader, Crews feels he must then comfort and reassure him — which leaves the satire with no real bite.

By comparison with Price and Crews, Doris Betts seems an unprepossessing writer; her following is limited mainly to her native North Carolina, and she has gotten little critical attention. Yet she has published a remarkably good collection of short stories, *The Astronomer*, and her novel *The River to Pickle Beach*, though overlong and somewhat disjointed, faces one of the new South's central psychological questions: In a region where "place" is vanishing, how does one find the identity and security it offered? She suggests no answer beyond the shared love of the married couple upon whom the novel focuses, but it is the question — the acknowledgment of an irrevocably altered South and the search for ways to come to terms with it — that is important. No Southerner can contemplate the diminution of the region's "few virtues" without a sense of loss and nostalgia, and Mrs. Betts is no exception; her fiction, however, is involved with the realities of the present.

Those realities, and exceedingly unpleasant ones, are also the subject of Madison Jones in *A Cry of Absence*, his fifth novel and one of the best to come out of the South in recent years. It is the story of a vaguely aristocratic woman who lives in a small town and discovers that one of her two sons is guilty of the brutal murder of a black civil-rights activist. That is good, solid, "Southern" material, but there is nothing imitative or anachronistic about the novel. Jones movingly portrays the

gradual destruction of the curtain of illusions with which the woman has surrounded herself, the desperation with which she clings to "family" against the proof of its corruption. In *A Cry of Absence* we see the white South in its last sad flailings against the inevitable. Place, community, and history all figure in the novel, but in the changed situation of a South facing up to its moral obligations.

Cormac McCarthy is an entirely different matter. His realm is the mythic, and his South is a dark, brooding land of forests, dusty roads, tumbled shacks. His narrative gifts are considerable, and in *Outer Dark* he tells a gruesome, fascinating tale: a girl has a child by her brother, with whom she lives alone in the Tennessee woods; he attempts to get rid of the infant, but it is found by a tinker who takes it with him on his journeys; the girl, sensing that the child is alive, sets off in pursuit, and the brother in turn follows her. It is a picaresque horror story, reminiscent of Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird*, but for all its use of violence and the grotesque it is more universal than Southern; *Outer Dark* occupies its own world. If McCarthy is "Southern" at all, it is for the Faulknerian tone of his prose and the darkness of his vision.

The youngest novelists in this group are James Whitehead and Charles Gaines, each of whom has written a novel set in the world of sport. The subject may seem trivial, but in the postwar South sport has assumed untoward social and psychological overtones. In Whitehead's *Joiner* the sport is football, as played in small-town Mississippi, in a state college football factory, and in the pros. The novel is narrated by "Sonny" Joiner, "an essentially honest fat giant who, God curse the same, enjoys histories, and how they get told." His personal history is a scrambled mess of football, sex, whiskey, violence, and amateur philosophy, but through it all Whitehead has managed to place traditional themes — particularly that of the burden of racism — in a convincing contemporary setting. Joiner himself becomes a metaphor for the whole South, past and present warring with each other, gentleness and violence intermingled.

Gaines's *Stay Hungry* is far tighter in construction, and overall more successful. One would not expect to meet its people in a Southern novel — they are a group of Birmingham, Alabama, weightlifters and gymnasium hangers-on — but Gaines makes a great deal out of them. In the relationship between Joe Santo, hero of the bodybuilders, and Craig Blake, a wealthy dilettante, he draws a sharp and revealing contrast between people who are exuberantly engaged in life and the flaccid rich who go slumming among them, "living" vicariously. The novel would be better were its resolution more definite, but it is distinguished

by lucid prose, firm grasp of theme, and a feel for the South as it is — the look-alike new cities, “the used-car lot, Dairy Queen, junk store waste that spread around the city like a poisonous film in every direction,” the country club suburbanites, the boosters, the small towns still happily stuck in their down-home ways.

And then there is Walker Percy. He is not a “young” novelist, but his career has been relatively brief and his perceptions are incomparably fresh. In *The Moviegoer*, *The Last Gentleman*, and now *Love in the Ruins*, he has provided the definitive portrayal of the tacky-tacky new South, a portrayal drawn with clarity, humor, and gentlemanly outrage. *Love in the Ruins* may or may not be the best of his novels, but its hilarious nightmare fantasy of what in a few years the South could become has the ring of truth. The novel is political, and its politics suit no one’s ideological convenience but the author’s. Percy is antiprogrammatic, suspicious of zealots of every persuasion, certain only of the enduring values of knowledge, tradition, civility, dignity, decency, and diversity. When his antiheroic hero, Thomas More, retreats from futuristic madness to an island hideaway, it is

. . . because it’s home and I like its easy-going ways, its religious confusion, racial hodgepodge, misty green woods, and sleepy bayous. People still stop and help strangers lying in ditches having been set upon by thieves or just plain drunk. Good nature prevails, even between enemies. As the saying goes in Louisiana: you may be a son of a bitch, but you’re my son of a bitch.

So, in the end, Walker Percy takes us back to where we started: closeness to the land, neighborliness, humility before the lessons of history. The Southern novel as we have known it is a thing of the past — though what a rich and glorious past — but its great themes still beckon. The first Southern novelists located and defined them; now, perhaps, it is the task of the new novelists to keep them alive.

Jonathan Yardley

IMAGES OF THE SELF: NEW YORK AND PARIS

MYTHOLOGIES. By Roland Barthes. Selected and translated from the French by Annette Lavers. Hill and Wang. \$5.95.

CRITICAL ESSAYS. By Roland Barthes. Translated from the French by Richard Howard. Northwestern University Press. \$10.00.

BALZAC TO BECKETT. By Leo Bersani. Oxford University Press. \$8.50.

Racine c'est Racine: sécurité admirable du néant. — *Mythologies*, 1957.

The "proof" of a criticism is not of an "alethic" order (it does not proceed from truth), for critical discourse — like logical discourse, moreover — is never anything but tautological: it consists in saying ultimately, though placing its whole being within that delay, what thereby is not insignificant: Racine is Racine, Proust is Proust. . . .

— *Les Essais Critiques*, 1964.

The first quotation comes at the end of a brief article that uncovers a persistent feature of "bourgeois" myth-making, the tendency to reduce the complexity and richness of cultural phenomena to the self-evidence of a tautological truth.¹ The tautology postulates an ineffable essence of Racine; it abstracts the work's historical reality, and violently refuses any critical/philosophical interpretation in the name of an aggressively mobilized common sense. It asserts its secure, formal truth at the price of all content or differentiation: in the dark all cats are gray. The whole aim of *Mythologies* is to demystify the reductive formalism which transforms complex historically determined facts into self-justifying essences, which substitutes a false nature, whose principle is tautological, for historical reality whose logic is dialectical. Hence, Barthes's critique of "bourgeois" ideology, from within a broadly Marxist

1 The article, "Racine est Racine," is not one of those chosen by the translator for inclusion in the English version. She has cut Barthes's book roughly in half. In general, she seems to have operated on the principle that English readers would not be interested in pieces dealing with the French literary scene, with French politics, or specifically French phenomena (Le Tour de France, Les Music-Halls). Since those are frequently the object of Barthes's most impassioned, penetrating insights, the effect is to leave one with the impression of a man somewhat preciously cultivating his connoisseurship of mass media and consumer culture. That effect is aggravated by her awkward, literal translation that makes Barthes's elaborate, but elegant style seem, by its increased difficulty, grossly out of proportion to the fragility of its subjects. By contrast, Richard Howard has translated all the critical essays with the grace and sureness we have learned to expect of him.

framework, can be considered the critique of a certain formalism from the standpoint of a certain historical content.

In the second instance, the quotation taken from the *Critical Essays*, Barthes adopts the very formula he earlier derogates. Here, his intention, symmetrical but inverse, is to defend a mode of criticism, structuralist criticism, whose aim is to liberate literature from the tyranny of meaning to which "bourgeois" culture submits it. For when "bourgeois" ideology encounters a phenomenon it cannot easily formalize, it resorts to a second-line defense, complicitous with the first, that seeks to reduce the cultural object to its message. As long as the work of art *means* something, it can be safely encompassed. In contrast to a content analysis, Barthes proposes a formal description that aims, not to decipher the meaning of the work, but to reconstruct "the rules and constraints of that meaning's elaboration"; "not to *discover* the work in question, but on the contrary to *cover* it as completely as possible by its own language."

Barthes himself, the most self-conscious of critics, is perfectly aware of the movement in his work from a critique of content to a critique of form, from thematic criticism to structuralist criticism, and he views that movement as a progress. In a second preface to *Mythologies*, written in 1970, he indicates the historical as well as the technical reasons why his early mode of thematic analysis must be abandoned in favor of a more subtle, semiological one. But where Barthes sees a certain progression, the parallel quotations at the beginning of this essay suggest a fundamental complicity of terms. In the first instance, the tautology "Racine ce'st Racine" is the innocent-looking formula whose ideological content — its false naturalness, its aggressive antiintellectualism — is unmasked by a critical method grounded in historical materialism. In the second quotation, the same formula becomes the rallying cry of a polemical formalism that seeks to liberate the signifier from the reductive, univocal meaning by which "bourgeois" culture secures its domain. But the parallel suggests the difficulty of distinguishing in principle between thematic criticism and the mystifications of bourgeois interpretation, between structuralist criticism and the ahistorical formalism of "bourgeois" myth-making. That both modes of criticism may share a certain identity with their objects, mass culture and high bourgeois culture, that both poles of both sets of terms are reducible to the same empty tautology should not come as a surprise. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel demonstrates that both Fichte's thematic critique of consciousness and Schelling's formalist one can be resumed by the identical proposition: "Ich bin Ich."

Barthes's dilemma is not unique, only more *readable* than that of most critics — to his immense credit. And there is no easy way out. It has become a commonplace of modern criticism to reject as a false dichotomy the opposition between form and content and, in the gesture of rejecting and transcending its terms, falling squarely back into one side or the other. Leo Bersani's book reveals just that tendency. For the opposition of form and content is not just any one; it is fundamentally implicated in a whole chain of metaphors which constitutes the very ground of Western thought: outside/inside; surface/depth; circumference/center; body/mind; appearance/truth. And as Jacques Derrida has shown, all those oppositions can ultimately be derived from the notion of *sign*, which implicitly and unavoidably distinguishes between signifier and signified. It is that notion that Barthes, following Saussure, unwaveringly adopts as the indispensable instrument of his critical enterprise. However much the critic may aspire to get beyond those dichotomies, they inform all his concepts, any language he might use to transcend them. But Barthes's work *assumes* them, none more vigorously and rigorously than his — wittingly and unwittingly. For if at times his theory is more alert than his practice (*Mythologies*), at others his practice subverts and exceeds his theory (*Critical Essays*). Barthes is regularly accused of being contradictory, protean, of changing positions and formulations from essay to essay, often from paragraph to paragraph. The charge within certain limits is doubtless true. But if that is a weakness, it is also his greatest strength. For the strength of his work lies in its subtle rhetorical strategy, its unwillingness to settle for a falsely secure theoretical position, and, conversely, its self-conscious refusal to take refuge in an unexamined critical practice. It weaves an intricate textual structure that exploits the freedom of its essayistic form, that moves with uncommon elegance and economy between the poles of the inescapable dilemma it poses. It is the movement of that rhetorical play, its back and forth, or more exactly, to borrow Barthes's own metaphor, its turnstile spinning, that opens and closes the metaphysical space of its own categories. The metaphor is emblematic of his most persuasive mode of critical discourse, one that renounces its scientific pretensions to purely formal description, that acknowledges the Nietzschean imperative of a world of signs without truth that offers itself constantly to interpretation — critical discourse that is itself both "language object" and "meta-language," writing and science, content and form, like the subtle, "contradictory" essay that spins around "Le dernier point sur Robbe-Grillet?" — a spiraling, interrogative movement — a question mark — like Mallarmé's dancer, "Crayonné au théâtre:"

To deduce the philosophical point at which is situated the dancer's impersonality, between her feminine appearance and a mimed object, for what hymen: she pricks it with a sure point, poses it; then unrolls our conviction in the figure of pirouettes prolonged in the direction of another motif. . . .

Or like the statue of Charles the Third and his wife in *Last Year at Marienbad* that Barthes evokes at the end of the Robbe-Grillet essay:

. . . an admirable symbol, moreover, not only because the statue itself induces various meanings, uncertain yet named (*you, me, Helen, Agamemnon*, etc.), but also because the prince and his wife are pointing quite specifically at some unspecified object (situated in the story? in the garden? in the theatre?): *this*, they say. But what is *this* — *this* what? Perhaps all literature [we might add, all criticism] is in this anaphoric suspension which at one and the same time designates and keeps silent.

The fascination of Leo Bersani's new book resides, on the one hand, in its breath-taking ambition, on the other, in its success — which is also the measure of its failure — in mediating between Paris and New York. Behind its conventional form and modest tone, it grants to the practice of criticism the most astonishing privilege. As the demystified description of literature's constant process of effacing its own realistic presuppositions, criticism succeeds where art inevitably fails (or at least where all the works from Balzac to Beckett fail). Criticism allows its practitioner to transcend the constraints of reality and to constitute for himself and for his reader a margin of freedom in which they can constantly revise and recreate their identity. As he puts it in his most audacious formula:

At the extreme, art would be the sacrificial model for critical reinventions of art, and criticism would ultimately inspire the critic out of criticism — into the testing of art's self-revising inventiveness in the multiple contexts of his own life.

Art leads to a new criticism and criticism leads to a new practice that transcends the limitations of art. In the slogan Bersani borrows from Robbe-Grillet and makes his own: "Art is life." And Bersani doesn't shrink from the political implications of his "radical" program, this "universalizing of art:"

Such a radicalism could, of course, produce anything. But, unlike those revolutionary programs which appeal to supposed laws of language and of history to sanction their own biases, a never for-

gotten sense of the arbitrary might promote . . . a continuous revision of fictions always acknowledged as tentative and experimental.

Bersani lets us read behind these sober lines a new political manifesto, one that escapes the limitations of Marxism and structuralism, and posits an even more radical revolution of the human subject, whose ideologically conscious avant-garde, we are led to believe, would be the party of literary critics!

It is easy to be ironic at the expense of this new politics. It appears, on the surface, to be more than slightly mad. But Bersani, always alert to his own most extreme implications, anticipates the charge and in frequent passages with Laingian undertones defends madness, more exactly, polemicizes against the automatic gesture by which our culture defends itself against the loss of fixed identities.

It is when Bersani begins to sketch the configuration of this new historical subject, when he sets the terms in which we can think its possibility, that one begins to suspect that Bersani is not nearly mad enough.

From the beginning of his book, Bersani acknowledges his debt to the critical-philosophical developments in France with which Barthes has been associated. Like Barthes, he views his critical activity within a political framework. Like Barthes, he sees himself engaged in the critique of "bourgeois" ideology, or even more broadly, in the critique of the whole tradition of Western metaphysics that subtends our culture. And like him, Bersani seeks to liberate us from the tyranny of meaning, from "fixed significance" and "secure interpretations" without falling prey to the hollow aestheticism of "art for art's sake."

Just as Barthes insists on the polysemous character of the sign, the structural inability of the signified to resume and to fix the complexity and multiplicity of the signifier, so Bersani, by analogy, resists the notion that a work of literature can be reduced to the expression of a biographical, intentional center, or, extrapolating further, that a coherent, fixed identity can be deduced from the multiple manifestations of personality. The history of modernity, from Balzac to Beckett, becomes in his hands the history of literature's constant, though often unwitting, postulation of a radical discontinuity between the self and language, between the manifestations of self and what we long to consider its center, the "true" self. Some writers (like Flaubert and Beckett) have seen the disjunction very acutely but have opted for an ineffable self that lies behind language whose presence is revealed in its absence from language. Others — Bersani lumps together McLuhan, Der-

rida, Foucault, the group of *Tel Quel* — discard the notion of the self entirely and seek “to codify and live by the laws inherent to the impersonal structures of myth, of media, of language.” If the gestures of the first group, he argues, lead to something like Oriental mysticism (a self beyond the self), the second, “insofar as they demonstrate the limitations which our instruments of expression impose on efforts of self-renewal and social renewal, are particularly congenial to political conservatism. . . .” The charge, gratuitously made and wholly unsupported, is a grave disservice to Bersani’s own critical talent. It obscures the degree to which the best of those French writers are careful to distinguish between what we might quickly call the ontic and the ontological level of philosophical inquiry. The efforts of Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan (whose absence, like Freud’s, from Bersani’s index is surprising) not to abandon, but to situate the possibility of the self deserve a more patient reading than Bersani has given them.

Bersani seeks to escape the dichotomy but at the same time to resist these “false” alternatives. His deconstruction of the traditional opposition between a true self and a manifest self begins by violently reversing the hierarchy implicit in the polarity. Where Barthes tends to maintain the tension between terms, Bersani rejects the notion of a profound self, of a fixed identity, of “an immobile, permanently recognizable image of the self” in favor of a “superficial” self, “one unconstrained in its acts by a profound identity,” one that “enact(s) the self along such a variety of surfaces that it tends to disappear in its own enriching diffusions.”

But what appears to be a simple reversal of the polarity is in fact a new synthesis, a third term. For in order to avoid the trap of postulating a mystical self beyond the self, or of acquiescing in the “political conservatism” that attends its radical loss, Bersani’s “superficial” self must be self-revising and, yet, in some way, self-identical. It must be both surface and depth, present yet constantly self-renewing, transcendental and yet empirical, universal but also singular. But that new synthesis is at least as old as Kant and in a different form as old as Aristotle. Bersani has reconstructed behind his own back, as it were, the configuration of what we are accustomed to call the imagination — the synthetic, third term *par excellence*. One need hardly recall the yeoman service that category has performed in the history of Anglo-American criticism in saving literature from servility to the real on the one hand, from phantasmagorical chaos on the other. It continues to operate with all its old efficacy under the guise of the most radical modernity, as “immediate experience,” or “the performing self,” or

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"the unmediated vision," or as "style beyond interpretation." And Bersani's remarkably interesting book, for all its superficial indebtedness to the Paris scene, is profoundly untouched by the sort of meta-linguistic concerns of critics like Barthes. The distance is visible in the opening pages of Bersani's book, in the casual but decisive transition from a discussion of the notion of *sign*, which acknowledges its debt to Paris, to the category of "experience," which he unhesitatingly assimilates to the first, despite the fact that it allows him, for 227 pages, never again to mention the thinkers who mark his point of departure — and then, as we have seen, only fleetingly. It is apparent that the roots of Bersani's book lie in what we have come to realize is the most fertile and persistent tendency of New York intellectual life, a tendency to shape all political, philosophical, and artistic problems in terms of a personal identity crisis.

Richard Klein

REVISIONS OF KEROUAC

VISIONS OF CODY. By Jack Kerouac. Introduction by Allen Ginsberg. McGraw Hill. \$8.95.

Recently, I interviewed Herbert Huncke who knew Burroughs, Kerouac, and Ginsberg in the time of their first friendship just after World War II. Huncke remarked that he never imagined that Kerouac was a writer then, believing that the ruggedly handsome and athletic figure was merely part of the scene around Columbia University in the forties. If Huncke, an incarnation of underground hip, didn't detect the writer's signals from Kerouac, I suppose the general public can't be blamed for taking him less than seriously, even after his nineteenth book. Of course the fashionable disparagement of Kerouac began long ago when the media circus, feeding on the apparent marketability of *On The Road*, created an awful vortex of publicity which somehow lessened Kerouac's credibility as spokesman for a generation in revolt.

In so many ways there is something essentially American about Kerouac's writing; his restless energies could never settle for a final form, and each of his novels demonstrates an eager variety in their differences from each other, and from conventional expectations of what the novel should be like. His voice, too, seemed representative of an endemic colloquialism in the American character: to listen to the record-

ings of Kerouac reading his poems is to attend to a purely natural inflection completely without literary affectation. Kerouac heard with raw ears (as Ginsberg said of William Carlos Williams) and fulfilled the romantic imperative of a language fashioned out of ordinary speech. But the demotic was only one of Kerouac's many voices. As John Clellon Holmes has asserted, Kerouac was gifted with an extraordinary range, almost responding stylistically to his own awe at the physical dimensions of his country, as his own exuberant bravado and gloomy sloughs were expressed in his great playfulness with words, his getting high with language as cascading rhythms resolved into Joycean sound games, or the baroque intricacies of *Dr. Sax*.

Visions of Cody was begun in 1951; intended as part of *On The Road*, it grew into a larger and perhaps more significant work. Part of it was issued by New Directions; most of it remained unprinted legend. The focus of the book was Neal Cassady, Dean Moriarty of *On The Road*, later busdriver for Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, now as authentic a part of American mythology as Paul Bunyan or Jesse James. Cassady's name in the book — Cody Pomeray — is an ironic testament to the writer's myth-making powers. After all, wasn't Wild Bill Cody's reputation an invention of Ned Buntline, the original dime-novelist? Yet behind that legend was the fact that Bill Cody guided men like General Phil Sheridan, Lieutenant Colonel George Custer, and James Bennett (who published the *New York Herald*) to the buffalo hunt spectacle, just as later he would become cultural impresario of the forgotten West with his touring buffalo circus. Wild Bill died in Denver during World War I, and Denver was the hometown of Kerouac's cowboy without a range, destined to work out his frustrated quest for frontier freedom in countless journeys from coast to coast like some fugitive hounded by the classical Furies. Before dying near a railroad track in Mexico in 1968, Cassady guided Kerouac and Ginsberg along an excessively spectacular route of sex and drugs. In search of a vision of a lost America, "the immense indefinable charm of the wide open free sprawling America of railroads and distant mesas," they found Poe's charnel house of horrors, and *Visions Of Cody* transcribes their attempted escape.

Kerouac presents Cassady in perpetual motion, like a man riding a wheel, impatiently intense, overspilling nervous anxiety, a torrent of words in a cage of restlessness. Virtually born on the road Steinbeck described in *Grapes Of Wrath*, Cassady spent his early youth on the Denver bowery in the company of his father, a derelict wino. Hopping freights through the West, living with bums, Cassady became a Beat code figure, for the wandering hobo was to emerge as a foil for Ameri-

can materialism. Cassady's careening escapades became the wild accomplishments of legend: ten arrests, several years in jails, innumerable car-thefts; a supposedly irresistible attractiveness to both men and women, a Pan complete with the flute he loved to play; incongruously reading Proust, or wondering whether poets were more important than philosophers while recapping automobile tires!

Cassady wrote his story in lost letters to Kerouac, and in the post-humous *The First Third*, an autobiographical account of his early Denver years that seems flat and uninspired when compared to *Visions Of Cody*. Kerouac's magic emerges as he evokes elegiac memories of popular culture as a backdrop by which to measure the Cassady legend: radio and *The Shadow*, comics and the Katzenjammer Kids, movies and the Three Stooges, burlesque shows and boxing matches. Cassady's untutored imagination responded to such forces; like Gatsby, he was the sort of primal force for whom a neon sign might represent hope and accomplishment instead of vulgarity. *The First Third* is straight narrative, brief, brutal, with the kind of antiliterary toughness so many American writers strain so hard to attain. *Visions Of Cody* offers endless elaboration, is Kerouac's most literary composition, full of the formal play with fictional dimension that most of his work rather blatantly excludes. *Visions Of Cody* is an exultation of Kerouac's best long-line sequences, passages combining the density of poetry with the compressed intensity of haiku, including at least two of his *Scattered Poems* run as prose. Digressively crowding impressions, anecdotes, tall-tales and cons, Kerouac's line approaches his own ideal of the jazz saxophonist, pursuing the ineluctable ultimate note, always furthering his sound with another association, always reaching and extending an oceanic continuum, secretly knowing that to cease is to die. A Shandyeian profusion is compounded by a variety of means to enrich the texture: drawings and letters, imitations of Tom Sawyer and Bloom's trial in *Ulysses*, superbly rendered discontinuities and drug fantasies. The book becomes a realization of Kerouac's most apt mode — a kind of diary notation in which distinctions between fact and fancy, prose and poetry are deliberately blurred for the sake of imaginative recall.

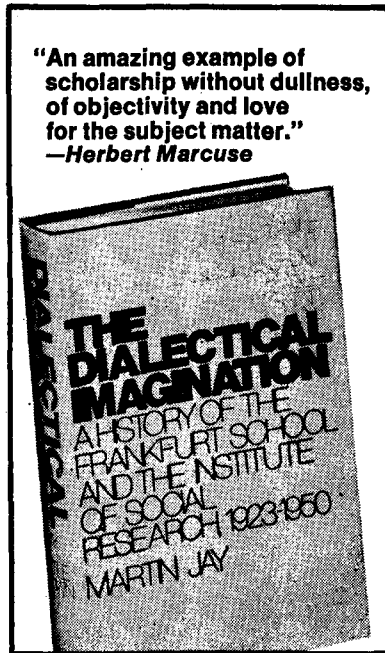
In stark stylistic contrast, almost as relief from such complexities, stands the famous tape, a series of conversations between Kerouac and Cassady while inhaling benzedrine, smoking marijuana, and consuming quantities of alcohol. The tape — which is probably what prevented the book from appearing for so long — is valuable as the record of how the Beats sustained their friendships on an axis of drugs, sex, and jazz. The hipster scene is authentically detailed: the Times Square underground, the lower East Side Henry Street flat that Burroughs maintained and

Huncke occupied as a place of sinister rendezvous and joyous release. Cassady describes Burroughs's life with Joan Adams and Huncke, in 1947 in New Waverly, Texas, where he and Ginsberg visited, and how he drove Burroughs and Huncke back to New York City in a jeep full of mason jars of marijuana that Burroughs had harvested. Cassady conjectures on how Burroughs, an expert marksman constantly shooting target practice in New Waverly, fatally shot his wife Joan through the head in Mexico the following year. These events are related in a manner that anticipated Pop realism with a graphic and relentlessly obsessive concentration on the ordinary; the catalyst is Rimbaud's aim of *dérèglement des sens*, and when Kerouac passes out, Cassady's wife appears and the inexhaustible Cassady continues like an overflowing dam, a model of the blocked writer with a story to tell and the ability to recall it without the patience to set it down. His premise is that a story can only be told once to achieve its fullest impact, and this may well be the source of Kerouac's own publicized bias against revision, a reminder of how close the Beats are to the oral tradition and the improvisatory spirit of the blues. The real impunity of the tape follows from Cassady's premise of immediacy as it tries to violate the barriers between art and life. It doesn't succeed at all! Ironically, the tape almost becomes the justification of literary enterprise, revealing the inadequacies of natural speech when juxtaposed to the more poetic resources of the writer, suggesting also in the boring bareness of its antistyle that the genuinely "unspeakable visions of the individual" are the concern of art, and only the subject of life. Despite the stimulation of drugs, the talk is grounded in inhibition, never soaring or even searing, without the Zen zaniness of Kerouac's own more scintillating imitations of the tape where again craft courts the illusion of spontaneity with greater grace and deftness than the actual can provide. Curiously, despite their early fears of a bugged universe where no man could speak freely, Burroughs, Kerouac, and Ginsberg have all used tape recorders in their work, anticipating by light years the more recent innovations caused by the use of tapes in literary works by John Barth and others.

Jack Kerouac is right now our most misunderstood and underestimated writer. Like Henry Miller he was uninterested in the ideal of "literary" perfection or in the orderly fiction of his time, believing that even seemingly immutable tastes could change. His writing was always excessive, disorderly, and unbalanced because he responded to entirely different imaginative priorities than most writers of his time, not because he was unable to compose in the conventional mode of his first novel, *The Town and the City*. His attitudes were often raw and im-

pulsive, as partial and erratic as his view of women was deplorable. Yet he seemed in touch with certain hidden vitalities of the future, verities beyond the ken of the middle class, like his warm response to black Americans that Eldridge Cleaver found so remarkable in *Soul On Ice*, or his involvement with the Buddhist notions that figure so significantly in his work. Like Neal Cassady in conversation, Kerouac had the gift of impromptu. Cassady's talent was in tirade, the tradition of the nightclub comic best exemplified by Lenny Bruce, the Jeremiah of the Dionysian outsider in ecstatic rout among the ashes of civilization. Kerouac, too, could write out of such abrupt and ungovernable impulses, but they were always tempered by the harmonies of his more meditative fancies, his essentially devotional sensibility. If the Cassady legend does become the lasting stuff of myth, it will be due largely to this generous and fiery book, published over a decade after the fact of writing, but all the more meaningful now that the bohemian releases once so privately explored have become so much more accepted and widespread.

John Tytell



\$12.50 at all bookstores Little, Brown and Company

PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST

THE EXILE OF JAMES JOYCE. By Hélène Cixous. Translated by Sally A. J. Purcell. David Lewis. \$15.00. ULYSSES ON THE LIFFEY. By Richard Ellmann. Oxford University Press. \$8.95.

Hélène Cixous's pretentious doctoral thesis about Joyce's life and work, published four years ago in France and (if the jacket blurbs are to be believed) excessively praised by reviewers in *Le Monde*, *L'Express*, *Nouvel Observateur*, and *Figaro Littéraire*, has now appeared in English. The minimal virtues of the French original have been further diminished by careless editing and incompetent translation. Inconsistencies, typographical errors, and confusing reversions to the French disfigure the text, and the translator's patent ignorance of Joyce introduces additional, ruinous mistakes in certain passages.¹ But the chief defects of *The Exile of James Joyce* belong to the author herself.

The book belongs to a hybrid genre more common in France, especially recently, than in the United States but not entirely unknown here — the academic exercise whose length and critical apparatus claim the authority of scholarship; but whose tone and argument continually assert the author's contempt for scholaring, his refusal to be confined to the perspectives of an ordinary critic. The result of this uneasy marriage of pedantry and daring is that *The Exile of James Joyce* attains to the tedium of the dullest scholarship, yet without a compensating rigor, and at the same time is very often as perversely unreliable and tendentious as the work of a poet-critic, yet without the genuine provocativeness and passionate conviction of such work.

The subtitle of the French original, suppressed in this translation, is "l'art du remplacement," and it is intermittently clear that Cixous is concerned especially to show how Joyce's art absorbs and transforms the biographical facts, and particularly to describe the process whereby Joyce's writing came to assert its full autonomy, finally reversing the

1 One dramatic, and irresistible, example: Analyzing a scene from the "Sirens" episode of *Ulysses*, Cixous claims that Blazes Boylan's "sudden arrival" at the bar "saddens Simon Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, the two barmaids. . . ." After Boylan departs, she writes, the men at the bar "give themselves up to an orgy of exciting memories in compensation, and end by choosing a scapegoat to act as a symbolic cuckold for all [un bouc émissaire qui servira de coqu commun], feeling the necessity to identify with the 'cock' Boylan." Cixous's next sentence designates Bloom as the symbolic scapegoat: "C'est Bloom qui va payer pour tous." But the translator, clearly a stranger to Joyce, transforms a merely fanciful reading into an impossible one, and rescues Bloom from the isolation he endures in Joyce's text, with this comically literal rendering of Cixous's French: "Bloom buys drinks for everyone."

conventional relations between life and art by determining the habits and patterns of Joyce's actual living. This notion is less remarkable than Cixous's aggressively self-conscious tone suggests, and it can be applied in some degree to writers other than Joyce, but there are occasions when she has some interesting things to say about the evolution of Joyce's work. Her book is immensely long, well over 700 pages, and despite a series of elaborate titles and subtitles, seems badly disorganized.

Structuralism is clearly the dominant influence on *The Exile of James Joyce*, but it seems an influence insufficiently assimilated and understood. There is no hint in these labored pages of Roland Barthes's explicit tentativeness, nor an awareness of the dangers inherent in the attempt to study literary texts with analytic techniques devised by anthropologists and linguists.

A secondary, but also damaging influence here seems to be the Sartre of *Saint Genet* and the immensely extended meditation on Flaubert, *L'Idiot de la Famille* (portions of which were being published in France as early as 1966), those remarkable and intimidating efforts by Sartre to recreate his author-subjects according to his own needs as a thinker and writer. That Sartre's Flaubert bears only a minimal resemblance to the author of *Madame Bovary* may not matter much, for Sartre is entitled to make special claims on us. But that Cixous's Joyce is so at odds with the real Joyce matters a great deal. One wishes she had read her author more carefully and had been less ardent to establish her credentials as a critic *au courant*.

In any event, the Joyce she offers us — a victim of "puritanical" impulses who "could only see a Godless communion as possible in a context of mutual degradation and befouling" — is mainly an invention, a fantasy-Joyce surely incapable of the unembarrassed earthiness that pervades *Ulysses*. Whether she is discussing Joyce and his circle, the fictional characters, or Irish culture in general, Cixous's resources of condescension seem nearly limitless, and she is capable of judgments so patronizing and reductive as to move one beyond mere disagreement to a kind of melancholy awe: "The Irish husband of 1900 is a man with very few chances of self-accomplishment outside his own home. Constrained and oppressed since childhood by the system of confession, he has no right to enjoy a private life."

Cixous rarely allows the recalcitrant facts to check her habit of daring generalization, and there are occasions when one feels she is wholly impervious to the text before her. At one point, in a casual footnote meant to serve as a simple reminder of the obvious, Cixous tells us that Joyce "wrote the eighteen episodes [of *Ulysses*] in their Homeric

order, remaining remarkably faithful to the form" (her italics). In fact, of course, just the reverse is true: Joyce emphatically alters the Homeric sequence and even deserts the *Odyssey* entirely in the "Wandering Rocks" chapter (where the classical model is an episode from the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes). Since Joyce's manipulation of the Homeric story is a crucial aspect of his novel's form and meaning, this is a massive, a fundamental error, very nearly fatal to Cixous's credibility as an interpreter of Joyce.

There are some striking and genuinely original ideas buried in Cixous's book, but its undisciplined excesses make the labor of salvaging them almost intolerable. A disquieting example of sensitivity, even brilliance, gone wrong, *The Exile of James Joyce* encourages the sad suspicion that the general level of literary discourse in France is currently no higher than in England or America.

The contrast with Richard Ellmann's elegant reading of *Ulysses* could scarcely be more decisive. Trying for less, he achieves immeasurably more. Where Cixous is prolix and disorganized, Ellmann is compact and lucid; where Cixous wears her scholarship with laborious ostentation, Ellmann's more genuine learning, implicit in every line, adds to the grace and authority of his argument. *Ulysses on the Liffey* may be a minor work in the increasingly impressive Ellmann canon, but it will have real value for students of Joyce and of modern literature.

Ellmann offers an original description of the structure of Joyce's masterwork — which he sees as advancing in groups of three chapters, each triad enacting a progression of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis — and supports his view with a series of compelling readings of each chapter. Ellmann argues that Joyce replaces the Homeric deities with "two undeclared gods of this world, space and time." He shows how these relate to other pairings crucial to *Ulysses* — body and soul, temporal and spiritual power — and suggests that "in every group of three chapters the first defers to space, the second has time in the ascendant, and the third blends (or expunges) the two." Applying this scheme with remarkable openness and tact, Ellmann identifies connections and parallels in *Ulysses* that have until now been slighted or misunderstood. He seems especially fine on the knottiest episodes, and his explication of the "Scylla and Charybdis" chapter, where Stephen gives his theory of *Hamlet*, is the first genuinely satisfying account of that episode that I have seen. Like all his readings, this one clarifies not only the meaning of many incidents and symbolic references within the chapter but also discloses the episode's intimate links with the rest of the novel, and particularly with the final chapter, where (as Ellmann convincingly shows)

the defining themes of "Scylla and Charybdis" are paralleled and completed, Stephen's "vision of the act of love as the basic act of art" finding its counterpart in Molly's "vision of love as the basic act of nature."

Ellmann's insistence on Joyce's reverent earthy affirmativeness ought to put to its final rest the old view of *Ulysses* as a companion in despair to *The Waste Land*. This limiting vision of Joyce's novel, still revived from time to time, seems now to be a response only to Joyce's satiric side. Others have pressed the larger, more encompassing view before, and Ellmann himself contributed much to it in his 1959 biography. (Ironically, despite its apparent allegiance to the latest critical fashions, Cixous's book regresses at times toward the older, largely discredited conception.) Ellmann's new volume fortifies and decisively extends our understanding of Joyce's impulse to comic celebration, implicitly locating *Ulysses* in a redefined modernism that is no longer dominated by visions of barrenness and no longer completely hostile to the nineteenth century.

Ulysses on the Liffey invites significant dissent, I think, in but one respect: its occasional willingness to collapse the distance between Joyce's intentions and what is actually there in the text itself. The most dramatic instance of this is Ellmann's claim that the various bodily organs assigned to each chapter in Joyce's elaborate schemas are really to be found in the novel. Ellmann presents a striking theoretical justification for this "archetypal man whose body the whole book limns." Perhaps he *ought* to be present, but the text seems to me unwilling to cooperate. Beyond this, and far more tentatively, one wonders whether the marriage of form and content in a few of Joyce's more flamboyant chapters is always as pacific as Ellmann's account implies. Even granting his notion that the literal level of the book declines in importance as the novel advances, there remains the possibility that Joyce's particular narrative strategies may yield his meanings (literal or otherwise) only imperfectly. Ellmann's explications do not sufficiently acknowledge the distinction between a theoretically persuasive strategy, an *intention*, and what is actualized on the page: do not acknowledge, that is, what many readers know with certainty — that "Cyclops" is a brilliant success while "Oxen of the Sun" is (relatively) a failure.

So, it may be, even Ellmann nods. But the substance of this humane, this witty and serious book is beyond challenge. It will enlighten new readers of Joyce as well as scholars, and it should also delight and move them. For like the greater book with which it is concerned, *Ulysses on the Liffey* is a rare testament to the humanizing value of intelligence and imaginative sympathy.

David Thorburn

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PLUCK AND POLEMICS

A WINDOW ON RUSSIA. By Edmund Wilson, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$7.95.

Pushkin once said of Lomonosov, the astonishing polymath and poet of Russia's 18th century, that he was "our first university." Universities being what they have now become, it would scarcely be possible to liken Edmund Wilson to one of them, but the idea holds in general. What we have in his last book is a summary of the work done over nearly three decades in the Russian Department. The early things are the work of a brilliant young Assistant Professor; the latter essays, while certainly magisterial in manner and occasionally illuminated by the former sparks, show the frequent lapses that reviewers can hardly bring themselves to notice, for they are the lapses of the Grand Old Man, who can be captious, crochety, self-indulgent, and downright erroneous.

He begins with a moving dedication to his wife (of Russian extraction). It is self-deprecating, which is interesting in itself, but more importantly it points to what strikes one first of all about Wilson's infatuation with the literature of Russia (and of how many other foreign cultures?): his contempt for translations and his determination to read writers in their own language. How many there were eager to pronounce this or that judgment on Pushkin — when they had heard of him — or Tolstoy at a time when Wilson was patiently conning the crude textbooks of his era! The first essay is a tribute to the language in which alone he was willing to read Pushkin, a tribute and an exhortation to learn it. It is good-humored, unbuttoned, and sympathetic, as pedagogues bent on encouraging their students ought to be, and it is sometimes mistaken, as, all things considered, it could hardly have failed to be ("there is no rule for neuter plurals"). But it does convey a sense of Russian, as opposed chiefly to French, the language and culture from which, even more than from American, Wilson seems to have approached his study of Russia, and it allows one to glimpse his own heroic travails and frequent exasperation.

That was written in 1943, a time when many of the now senior generation of certified Russian experts were taking their first lispings lessons in the language from the Army or Navy. It was at the same time that Wilson published a truly remarkable little essay on Pushkin, which, for all its diminutive size, some dozen small pages, is for me quite the best of all these pieces. To put its qualities in perspective one might quote a sentence from Vladimir Nabokov, with whom Wilson was still

on speaking terms, written only one year later. In a note appended to some translations from Pushkin, Nabokov wrote: "It seems unnecessary to remind the reader that Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) was Russia's greatest poet but it may be preferable not to take any chances." The readers of this wounding little reminder knew, of course, nothing of the kind. Wilson took even fewer chances, but it is almost amazing to read, at this early date, his assessment of Pushkin's status. Setting him among certain other writers born between 1788 and 1857 (Byron, Keats, Shelley, Heine, Poe, Musset, Jane Austen, and Stendhal), Wilson concludes that Pushkin "is the great figure of this short-lived group and the universal figure of that moment." Indeed, he goes further and concurs in a judgment still harder for the West to take, that Pushkin is "the only modern poet in the class of Shakespeare and Dante." Any cultivated Russian might have told him that, but the essay makes clear that Wilson has not relied upon hearsay evidence, for his terse little essay is replete with a detailed and particular illumination of Pushkin's work. It also conveys a true sense of Pushkin's career and of the contours of his artistic personality for an appreciation of which at their real worth readers would themselves have to do much of the labor that Wilson imposed upon himself. For balanced enlightenment, it is hard to praise this piece — and certain other things, such as the essay on Gogol — too highly.

The diligence underlying the better essays here — those on Pushkin, Gogol, Tyutchev, Turgenev, and Chekhov — is really quite edifying. Not only did Wilson school himself in one of the most difficult of the great modern languages, but he was never content to write even the briefest essay on a Russian author until he had read straight through the entire *oeuvre*, or as much of it as he could lay his hands on. But he realized that not all his diligence could make up for the lack of a Russian childhood.

Were there compensating advantages in the very condition of being a foreigner? From his having several times answered this question in the affirmative in these pages, I take it that Wilson found it not a little consoling. Having noted the non-Russian's obvious handicaps, he continues in a typical passage:

Yet the very necessity for the foreigner of paying close attention to every sentence may prevent the story from carrying him along so fast that he fails to notice exactly what is being said and how the author is saying it; and to come fresh to an accepted classic with a mature and unprejudiced mind may make it possible for him to see certain things that have been obscured for readers to whom the

language is native, by childhood associations or conventional interpretations.

Wilson's iteration of this makes it clear that he wished his readers to bear it in mind, and never more so than on those occasions when his essay had, as they very often did, some polemical basis, when he was coming at a Russian writer by disputing what a native Russian critic had to say of him. In the 1952 essay on Gogol, Wilson takes on a fairly easy opponent in Janko Lavrin, a conventional academic (and not actually a Russian by birth), and a much more dangerous one in Vladimir Nabokov. Nabokov's little book on Gogol, it ought to be said, is a gaily insouciant pastiche of insight, homage, and reckless half-truth which, if one chooses one's quotations with a sufficiently malevolent care, can be made to look silly merely by citing it.

But some dozen or so years later, in the mid-1960s, Wilson's consciousness of the foreigner's disadvantage was a good deal less present to his mind, and his confidence in his own perceptions, not to mention the judgments that he based upon them, had grown to quite unjustified and at times ludicrous proportions. This led to his disastrous review of Nabokov's edition of Pushkin's masterpiece, *Eugene Onegin*.

Since that review occasioned one of the most sanguinary literary polemics of recent times, one need scarcely do more than recall to readers of this journal its general tenor and proportions. Nabokov's reading of the *Onegin* had resulted in four tightly packed volumes containing a long introduction, an avowedly flat, literal translation, for which everything was sacrificed, even correct English grammar, in order to convey with a kind of painful clarity the exact verbal sense of the original, an immense commentary (the best in any language), the Russian text as Pushkin himself saw it through the press, and finally two long essays, one an original and provocative rethinking of the entire question of English and Russian prosody and the other a funny, exquisitely recondite attempt to trace the history of Pushkin's African forebear. Completely ignoring Nabokov's modest (for once) aim in making the literal translation, Wilson spent most of his time complaining that it did not read smoothly, contained unusual words, and was even downright wrong. In making the latter point, Wilson committed the almost unbelievable hubris of reading Nabokov several petulant little lessons about Russian grammar and vocabulary, himself blundering all the while. (Where were the Russian friends to whom he constantly alludes?) He also disliked the tone of everything, found the manners of his "personal friend" to be characteristically insupportable, dismissed the commentary not so much

for any faults he found as for its conveying more than anyone wished to know, and ended with an insulting compliment on the physical appearance of the books.

Nabokov, whose relish for polemics exceeds even that of Wilson, must have had trouble believing his good luck. He answered with an article that was simply annihilating — or would have been against any victim less resilient and plucky. But I must say that at this stage of his career Wilson's pluck exceeded his judgment. It was a mistake to include this thoroughly discredited article in the present collection, and it was an even worse mistake to append a note of 1971, where it is blandly stated that the original review has been revised to eliminate the very blunders that Nabokov had so gleefully pounced upon. Embarrassingly conciliatory, Wilson goes to the length of complaining that Nabokov, since he is such a practical joker, ought not to mind "my own attempts to tease." The afterthought of 1971 also reveals that Wilson had broken one of his own earlier rules: he had read Nabokov only piecemeal, and not very perspicaciously at that. It is a rule which, had he observed it, might have allowed him to see the *Onegin* in an essential perspective, that of Nabokov's own lifework. But the few stopgap notes that he now appends on some of Nabokov's novels are not very good, and, anyway, it is too late. There are other essays at the end of the book which deal with lesser writers and are therefore of lesser interest. Edmund Wilson's most attractive qualities nevertheless show through the most perfunctory work. Recognizing the moral stature of Solzhenitsyn, for instance, and the genuinely moving passages in such a novel as *The Cancer Ward*, Wilson is too stubbornly honest not to observe that he is as bored by conscientious bricklaying as by any other bricklaying and finally that "one does not know how to criticize the dryness of some of these pieces." There is, incidentally, no evidence here, as there is in all the other essays, that he had ever read the works in Russian.

Clarence Brown

LETTERS

P. R.:

Critic Morris Dickstein leveled some pretty serious charges against me in his bombastic, characteristically flag-waving reply to my letter, both printed in the *Partisan Review* (Fall 1972). I feel that a reply to his reply is in order.

According to the courtroom definition, a rape occurs when the woman says "no" at the crucial genital moment. ("The Politics of Rape," Liberation News Service, *Los Angeles Free Press*, Sept. 1, 1972). The *Random House Dictionary* defines rape as "-n. 1. the act of seizing and carrying off by force. 2. the act of physically forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse. -v.t. 4. to seize, take, or carry off by force. 5. to plunder (a place). 6. to force (a woman) to have sexual intercourse -v.i to commit rape. (ME *rape(n)* L *rapere* to seize, snatch) In Richard Wright's *Native Son* Bessie says "no" at the crucial genital moment and is forced; therefore she is raped regardless of whether, as Dickstein writes, "she is his own girlfriend," an expression which belongs to the same class as "his own mule."

In a paragraph which must rank as one of the sneakiest, creepiest, molelike pieces of critical doctoring even by Dickstein's standards and in which he distorts both Baldwin's viewpoint and mine, Dickstein claims: "Bigger feels no hatred for Bessie." He had a funny way of showing it; he killed her, but of course Dickstein has already given his views about the quality of female life: something that belongs to a man to do with what he pleases: Dickstein, club in hand,

dragging a woman across the snows of Europe is my suggestion for the *Partisan Review* "intellectual cartoon."

I suspect that critics like Dickstein, who still view black writing as an annex to the old John Reed Club reading room, enjoy unsavory characters like Bigger Thomas because he is the kind of thug who terrorizes Afro-Americans but, like the sorry chumps these Biggers are, takes people like Dickstein metaphorically speaking, to where they are too chicken or too lazy to take themselves. Of course, when the Biggers turn on them, mug them, they hire some house right heavy to write nasty things about all "blacks" in their little "rationalist," "humanist" newspapers and magazines.

In his original article Dickstein wasn't talking about "mutual influences" between "black" and "white" writers as he claims in his letter. The influences were going one way from Dickstein's mostly Jewish (that's not racist, that's objective) writers, comedians, and poets to black writers, the kind of patronizing, paternalistic, jingoistic boasting that comes out as Harry Lesser in Bernard Malamud's sad, old-folks, attempt to be with-it, *The Tenants*. In this book, the novelistic counterpart of Dickstein's criticism, Lesser, the virile, conscientious, Jewish writer teaches poor Willie Spearmint (the kind of pun that would be booed even on the Johnny Carson Show), a grunting groaning subhuman, craftsmenships, cap'n. (Based upon his characterization, Anatole Brodyard, in a review of the book in the *New York Times*, Sept. 20, 1971, referred to blacks as "lesser human beings"; the kind of term those "awful," "pathological."

"perverted," "demonic," "evil," "aberrant," Nazis used to use.) If Dickstein had been talking about "mutual influences" he would have cited George Schuyler or James Weldon Johnson, who wrote about the "white negro" long ago and wrote about it better, as having influenced or even *antecedent* Norman Mailer's "white negro." But certainly anyone who says, "Today black people in this country have *begun* (my italics) to speak for themselves" when black people have not only been speaking for themselves as long as they've been here but have been writing the particular kind of essay of which Dickstein calls Norman Mailer, "the presiding genius." (Try *David Walker's Appeal*, 1829.) Dickstein is too ignorant to draw or discern mutual influences. He didn't think anyone would notice in a day when not only "blacks," but thousands of white students are being educated to Afro-American writing.

No one but a handful of critics who share Dickstein's ideology have claimed that white critics can't review "black writing," the crippled red herring that Dickstein raised in the first place. "White" critics are contributing volumes of criticism to not only "black writing," (a particular school with a definite aesthetic and viewpoint, which along with many other schools and individual styles may be grouped under the heading Afro-American writing) but to Afro-American culture in general. Some like Michel Fabre, Michael Preston, Leslie Fiedler, Tony Tanner, John O'Brien, Jerry Bryant, Daniel Jaffe, Walter Sheppard, Frank MacShane, Neil Schmitz, Richard Morris, Fielding Dawson,

Donald Phelps, the circle of "white" critics around the University of Buffalo's magazine, *Paunch*, have contributed intelligent articles and have done their homework. Others like Dickstein use "black writing" to feed some personal familiar that torments them like warning Jezebel (Updike's mama) of the company she keeps.

When their shallowness and weird motives are pointed out they fall back upon the old McCarthy contingency plan, "you're against me because you're a racist." The rest of Dickstein's letter was full of such cry-baby drivel. Dickstein like some "blacks" who share his ideology (he resents me "being all cool hip and liberated"; he wants me foaming at the mouth and screaming at him like some fucking savage) is most likely an individual on most occasions but in a pinch wails along with the tribe and throws up a rally. I mean, suppose the Budge book I quoted had said that the most severe critics of the Egyptians were the Greeks? Would Robert Graves organize a demonstration against me? Would Zeus send me hateful things through the mail? Of course, individuality is something that Dickstein would deny me. Notice how, in his reply, he interpreted sections of my letter as not only performing a "dis-service" to myself but to other blacks as well. Dickstein in his article, we hope, was writing the views of Dickstein and Dickstein alone, but to Dickstein I have to be Moses leading the cast of "Green Pastures" across Dickstein's Red Sea. On the other hand, to even suggest that there's a certain Jewish critic who in a gung-ho manner measures everybody else's artistic traditions by the standards of a few eastern

Jewish writers is to invite comparisons to Martin Bormann or somebody.

I appreciate Dickstein wishing me the same career as Jezebel. At least on an "unconscious," "unwitting" level the sucker knows where we stand. Jezebel was a priestess of Baal. I don't mind Baal too much, this delightful "phallic god" who enjoyed good food and wines; I mean, you don't see Baal recklessly, viciously, and intolerantly trampling upon other people's altars (like some shiftless and lazy critics I know.) And I wouldn't be too sure about who will suffer the "bad end" Dickstein desires me to have either. Since Jezebel and I finally have an opportunity to tell our side of an old, old story perhaps it will be Dickstein who will suffer the "bad end."

ISHMAEL REED

P.S. Ask *Time* magazine about the irate letters they received after erroneously attributing a poem by Claude McKay to the authorship of an "illiterate," Attica prisoner.

Mr. Dickstein replies:

There's no need for me to repeat points I've made twice already, simply because Mr. Reed continues ever more stridently to misstate them. The concerned reader will judge for himself whether my essay attributes the successes of contemporary black writing to "mostly Jewish" models. Aside from a comparison to *Portnoy* and a few references to Norman Mailer, no Jewish writer is even mentioned. And far from describing Mailer

as the originator of the personal essay, I specifically trace his use of it to the example of James Baldwin. That Cleaver later preferred Mailer to Baldwin is not my assertion but a matter of record, in *Soul on Ice*.

Furthermore, I can't see what Bernard Malamud has to do with it, for in reviewing *The Tenants* in the *Times Book Review* I made much the same criticism of his unconvincing portrayal of Willie Spearmint that Mr. Reed does. Mr. Reed, however, prefers to remember Anatole Broyard's review in the daily *Times*, since it better suits his stereotype of "white" criticism.

As far as rape is concerned, it would be nice if all questions of interpretation and morality could be settled by reference to the dictionary, but Richard Wright showed no inclination to portray Bigger as a simple thug or label him a rapist. His view of Bigger, despite the terrible things he is driven to do, is more complex and sympathetic than Baldwin (or Reed) would wish.

Far from wanting Mr. Reed to come on like a savage, I only ask him to overcome his cultural chauvinism at least to the extent of not distorting my essay, which itself was a plea for a more disinterested criticism. Mr. Reed's latest cartoon does not augur well for any such development.

CORRECTION:

P.R. apologizes for neglecting to credit Pantheon as the publisher of Juliet Mitchell's *Women's Estate*.

PR

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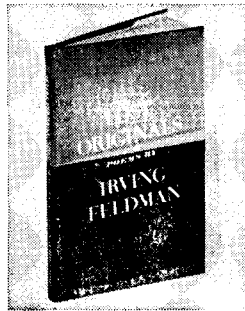


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